THE MAN FROM HOME

HARRY LEON WILSON

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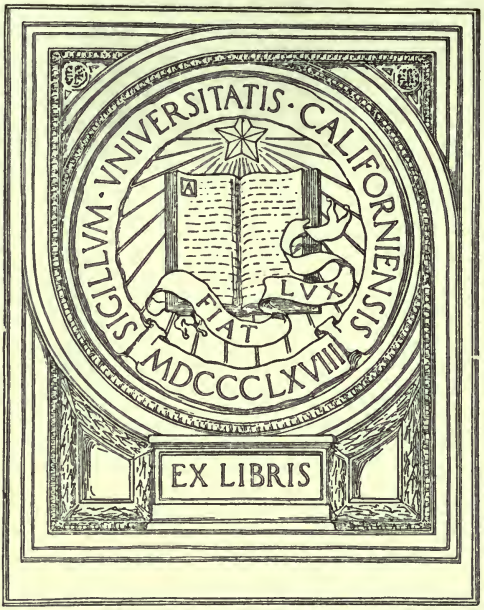

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THE MAN FROM HOME

"'I kept thinking you might sing for me some evening'"

[Page 204]

THE MAN FROM HOME

A NOVEL BY

HARRY LEON WILSON

FOUNDED UPON THE PLAY
BY N. BOOTH TARKINGTON
AND HARRY LEON WILSON

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

ILLUSTRATED BY
C. H. TAFFS

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THE MAN FROM HOME

CHAPTER I

A SPARKLING DAY AT SORRENTO

It was Italy and Sorrento; and so perhaps the utmost of beauty that Italy can anywhere achieve on a full-sunned day of early December. A sparkle in the warm air saved its caresses from what might have been a cloying sweetness, overladen as it was with the scent from blossoming vine and tree that covered the terraced hillsides. Color and warmth and always the sparkle. Sorrento sparkled, and the Hotel Regina Margherita, green-bowered on the verge of its gray cliff, especially sparkled, to dazzle the eyes of beauty-seekers who might first behold it from the brilliantly stained sea below. This sparkle, moreover, picked out the tiny villages setting the curve of the coast to Naples in the

blurred distance. There was even a hint of sparkle ascending the gray slopes of Vesuvius, smouldering there in lazy, almost friendly menace.

To Miss Ethel Granger-Simpson, alone for the moment in the green garden of the Regina Margherita—she leaned on its seaward balustrade to face the enchanting distance—life itself had become a mere series of sparkles; life compacted sheerly of beauty and exaltation, a delectable mystery to be faced with joy-widened eyes and welcomed with open arms; arms yearning, fearless, certain. As she held her young gaze to the sparkle of her own future, her eyes of the flesh artlessly symbolized this with islands far out in that painted sea, dim of shape but misty-glorious in promise.

As for the general picture, the girl herself was no negligible item in its opulence. Indeed, rather a tremendous adventure in line and color she would have been for any painter. The fishermen thereabouts and those who made music

for money spoke of her quite simply as "the most beautiful English maiden," though it is true that one of these, a tried observer of the English fair, had been more than a little bothered by the smallness of her feet. Hearing her speak, you would have thought her English, certainly; nor would your first delighted glance have unsettled this notion. Not until after other glances had been contrived would some at first vague doubt have sounded; vague so long as the appraising survey was content with the radiant general effect; vague, in short, until it came to question the small nose of her. Here distinctly was a feature to revive caution in the shrewd observer; not to lessen his delight, be it soundly remembered; merely to teach him that snap judgment about the nationality of beauteous strangers may be often faulty.

"English—all but the nose!" we seem to follow his reflections. Then, further, "But with that nose she can't be English at all. So

what can she be? Surely, not American, and yet——"

Thus our shrewd observer, whom we need endow with but moderate shrewdness—enough to divine but not to solve the mystery. Leave him then to a speculation not less joyous because unrewarded, his discreet glance, as we hope, returning ever and again to the small but engaging nose that so defiantly affirms itself not English.

His conclusion is sound. The English nose is indubitably a more nearly finished product, often enough eloquent with disdain for other kinds of noses. In its supreme manifestation it is long and thin, the nostrils empowered to lift delicately should the possessor be moved to express disdain, a nose gifted for the finer manifestations of hauteur; a nose, moreover—may it not be put bluntly?—superbly adapted to sniffing. Indeed, only with this fashion of nose may one sniff perfectly. The Darwinian might suggest that a race with an inherent

genius for sniffing would inevitably evolve this precise nose, though that is beyond our scope.

The nose in question falls sadly short of this type. It piquantly suggests alertness and a certain wilfulness of action in its possessor. One might argue a capacity for stubborn adherence to some prized plan under the rudest sort of discouragement, yet detect also a vast and puzzling capacity for surrender. Then, too, a just discernible tilt promises irreverence —perhaps at some critical moment.

"Surely not American, and yet—" Thus again our fairly sapient physiognomist. With our superior power of penetration let us resolve his doubt by invading unobtrusively for a moment the current of the maiden's own fancies.

"Surely not American, and yet—" And yet she was! At this precise instant that slight tilt of the nose is more than wontedly evident for she is retrospectively scanning the land of her birth—"the States," as she has already

learned to call it. Clear and harsh are its outlines under that nearer vision of misty, golden islands and a present in which one meets only the right sort of people. Back there one simply didn't meet them. One never could, alas! meet them there. The smoky, ugly point in her vision was the town of her birth, spreading in dull flatness to every horizon, peopled by beings worthy enough, perhaps, in their crude, dollar-hunting way, but socially quite, quite impossible. And she was out of it forever, away from its crudity, away from its awkward strivings after gentility, its piteous failures, its vulgar complacencies, away from that fell barren and in a world of true culture mellowed by tradition, peopled by beings of suavest finish. As a practised gourmet might enhance his gusto at a feast by recalling some famished moment of the past, so she now gilded this already refulgent present of hers by contrasting it with that ignoble life she had left behind.

What a drab little provincial she had been—

and her brother as well—when they had flown from that squalid obscurity to the great world beyond the sea! And how rapidly they had progressed, how finely they had flowered once they were free from the confining narrowness of—let us out with the brutal truth—of Kokomo! But two years away from that and they were unquestioned citizens of the great correct world, consorting on terms of ostensible equality with the only people one should know—people who mattered.

And how easily it had all come about! It seemed to the girl that a very special providence had directly confided that flitting, aspiring couple to the skilled directorship of one nobly born, to no less a personage than the Lady Victoria Hermione Trevelyan Creech. It had more than once been intimated by confidantes of Lady Creech that she, too, regarded the connection as having been decreed by a special providence. She had not, it was rumored, found beneath her dignity the accept-

ance of an honorarium for services royally rendered in guiding her young charges among the shoals of European society.

But, if this gossip spoke truly, was ever reward so abundantly earned? Had there not been conferred upon the once obscure descendants of the now forever obscure John Simpson of Kokomo, Indiana, U. S. A., the mantle of a prestige far too effulgent for its value to be computed in mere American dollars? Indeed, the nobly-born one had shown herself to be no paltry dabbler with half-measures. When the Lady Victoria Hermione Trevelyan Creech deigned to take up persons she did it wholeheartedly. No mere presenting them to a few of the right sort and thereafter allowing them to do their own climbing. No such slighting of her task. After a few discreet and wholly judicious inquiries to prove that the late John Simpson had indeed been one of those sordid American money-grubbers—and quite vulgarly successful in his low pursuits—her charges

had been actually inducted into the very sacred inner circle of her own family, where, moreover, they had been welcomed, warmed, cherished,—almost, it would seem, guarded. With what unaffected, fond geniality had the two young things been received by his lordship, Earl of Hawcastle, that polished noble who must often have been shocked by the American rawness of his sister-in-law's charges! With what superb tact had his lordship's long-time friend, the high-born Madame de Champigny, choice flowering of France's old noblesse, labored to correct their abundant gaucheries without seeming to remark them! And how tolerantly had his son, the Honorable Almeric St. Aubyn, striven to prevent their too-conscious brooding over the soundless depths between his station and their own.

As to this attitude of the Honorable Almeric, there may have been counsel, admonition, a veiled compulsion, from his elders. One may but guess vulgarly at that. At least it is

certain that neither Lady Creech nor the Earl of Hawcastle had ever evinced the faintest alarm at his methodical if somewhat spiritless attentions to the crude little American heiress. Open-eyed to the affair, they yet remained calm in the face of the menaced mesalliance.

The stained sea below the cliff continued to glint its million facets up to the eyes of the dreaming girl. "St. Aubyn!" she murmured, and beheld over the misty horizon a memorable line of that ilk setting themselves to deeds of high emprise. She saw them at Crécy and Agincourt; more of them in the panoply of Crusaders; and a later one, heir to all that shining glory—Almeric St. Aubyn. Almost wistfully now she clad him in the knightly habiliments of those illustrious forbears. "St. Aubyn!" she murmured again, softly ecstatic. "And that will be my name, really my name!"

But let us not too crassly profane the sanctities of love. A less direct approach would be seemlier. A moment longer permit the girl to

face that enchanting future with artless, certain eyes while the sea sparkles back its assurance. Let us turn from her to detect something almost like a sparkle in the languid eyes of the Honorable Almeric St. Aubyn as the figure of Miss Ethel Granger-Simpson (and that was a sparkle indeed!) entered his field of vision. She was going to mean so much to him—that is, if one might rely upon what his excellent father had been able to learn about the mightiness of old John Simpson as a hunter of American dollars.

We catch him as he loiters toward the girl, a fair, fresh-colored youth of twenty-five or so, in riding garb of white duck at the moment. His hat of Panama straw has a fold of light tan and white silk about the crown. His riding-stock with its white collar becomes a puffed tie below, of a pink that harmonizes gently enough with his light tan waistcoat and his glistening tan boots. He approaches the dreaming maid to accost her with that simple

directness so characteristic of his unspoiled nature.

"Saw you and your brother havin' a sort of a talk just now. A couple of serious beggars you looked. What was all the row?"

His methods, it may be said, were never complex. The girl shyly faced him.

"We were talking of you—of you and me," she confessed. And she made it a confession, indeed! But the Honorable Almeric was never less subtle.

"My word, though, but you've kept me waitin'. I mean to say, what's the answer and all that sort of thing?"

"The answer? Oh, it's—it's yes!"

The suitor permitted himself the gesture of a raised hand to denote hearty rejoicing.

"Jolly, that! Dare say we'll hit it off. Governor'll be pleased too. Been a bit below himself lately, the Governor. Fancy this may buck him up. What?"

"Oh, Almeric! It's—it's—I can't make

it seem true yet. I must go off alone to think it all out." She turned away. "But the answer is yes—I know that much!" she called back. A moment later she was running with a sort of guilty delight along the terrace and up the steps of the ivied wing that held her apartment in the Hotel Regina Margherita.

"Rather rippin' little sort, after all," reflected the enamoured one as she vanished through the awninged portal. Then he turned wearily to gladden his august relatives, for down a shaded aisle of cypress now advances the Earl of Hawcastle in rather pained converse with Lady Creech. We take him as he comes, a well-preserved, well-groomed man of fifty-six, with close-clipped gray mustache and graying hair. The face reveals, perhaps, some slight traces of high living, yet the eyes are quick and cool and shrewd; capable eyes, one would say. He carries himself well in the finely striped suit of flannels he has chosen. His white shoes, the hat of soft straw with its broad

ribbon, the cravat of pale old-rose crepe, the stick and gloves he bears, all are perfect details in a faultless ensemble. We are left with an impression of high-bred distinction. His speech as he addresses his companion reaches us as that of an English gentleman and man of the world, simple, without vocal flourish. A prepossessing person, this, more genial, more cordially inviting, than his iron-gray sister-in-law who is always formidable and often forbidding. She, it would be judged, tarries in the late fifties, tall, rigidly austere, with no evil fripperies of dress, but with a manner! She is nodding vexed comprehension to the speaker's words as they approach. Then her eyes encounter the Honorable Almeric and instantly engage him with a very definite fierceness. The youth now sprawls restfully in a wicker chair. He has lighted a cigarette with the gusto of one who has dared and achieved. The Earl of Hawcastle hastens forward to accost his son with an expectancy rather poignant.

"Well, well!" This was crisply nervous.

The Honorable Almeric favored his sire with a stare of ennui.

"'Lo, Governor! 'Lo, Aunty!"

"Well, I say!" The nervous tensions of this communicated itself to the other. He brightened visibly.

"Out ridin' this mornin' with Miss Granger-Simpson. Rippin' little thing, after all, *isn't* she?" His voice, habitually loud, carried an accent somewhat foppish with a hint of the "Guardsman" affectation of languor and indifference.

"Go on! Go on!" Here was no languor, affected or otherwise. Only a sharp impatience.

"And don't mumble your words!" This from Lady Creech with the tang of fierce annoyance she habitually gave the phrase. For this personage wore her quite evident deafness not as a mortal infirmity, rather as a marked distinction—in truth, as a bitter reproach to a world

of lesser folk who did constantly mumble its words. The Honorable Almeric remained impassive, breathing smoke to the benign sky of Italy.

"Yes. Didn't stop long with her, though."

"Be so good as to tell us why." The words are inoffensive but too evidently his lordship is about to boil.

"Well, you see, a sort of a man in the village, rum sort of gaffer with silly whiskers, got me to go look at a bull-terrier pup. Wonderful little beast for points he was. Fancy finding him in this silly foreign sort of hole! Jolly luck, wasn't it? My word! He's got a head on him——"

His lordship has really boiled. He boils bitterly.

"We'll concede his tremendous advantage over you in that respect. Come, is that all you have to tell us?"

His son languidly stifled a yawn. "Oh, no; she accepted me."

"'Come, is that all you have to tell us?'"

"Thank God! Thus piously and with an exhalation of marked relief his lordship dropped to a seat facing his son and beamed fondly upon him.

"But of course!" This from Lady Creech, resonant, almost indignant. "But of course she'd accept. Why shouldn't she accept? How could she not accept? But of course!"

"Quite so!" The accepted man struggled with another yawn. "I say, you know, I've made her awf'ly happy! She had to go off to think about it. Fancy that! A queer little bit she is—always thinkin'. Rather rippin' sort, though. Dare say she'll get over thinkin' and all that sort of thing." He again emitted smoke to the placid heavens.

The Earl of Hawcastle was now breathing luxuriously as one who rests after some desperate scramble up a hillside. He was about to speak when he turned alertly at the sound of nearing voices.

"The brother," he warned, and the somewhat

eager expression he had worn relaxed instantly to a fond, smiling candor as a couple approached through the aisle of cypress.

The Comtesse de Champigny flung a lilt of a laugh ahead of them—the Frenchwoman of thirty, or as little more as makes no difference even in that explicit sunlight, wholly alive, her piquant face ever at play, bewitching in a tenderly tinted morning frock very lately from Paris. Her elaborately dressed hair is surmounted by a jaunty toque. Even her manner of bearing and wielding her light silk parasol would repay earnest study. The twain are at hand. The Comtesse swims radiantly in the infatuated glance of none other than Horace Granger-Simpson.

Of this youth of twenty-one it may at once be said that the affair of his nationality would never even briefly puzzle our physiognomist. Brother Horace is cursed with features that will forever be flagrantly American. Nor is he unconscious of this misfortune. With a superb

fortitude he labors to nullify it in speech and dress. Horace is most smartly decked in flannels with a multitude of adjuncts—furbelows one might almost say,—with the stamp of Regent Street upon them. He looks confidently forward to a time when his attire, still finely correct in all its essentials, will nevertheless reveal here and there a certain grand carelessness of detail, as at present superbly exposed by the two gentlemen before him. But he dares not yet relax. For the present Horace has to be vastly careful about cravats and spats and tiepins and waistcoats. Also must he labor with his speech. He might even be thought more determinedly English in his speech than these illustrious survivals of a great race who were born to it. Sometimes, it must be told, he forgets his accent. But not often. He is caution itself in this. He rushes forward now to greet the Earl of Hawcastle who rises buoyantly. There is a cordial clasp of the hands.

Charmed, my young friend. Charmed! I

can think of no happier match for my son," exclaimed his lordship with flawless veracity.

"You know, then?" Horace beamed. "Isn't it ripping!" (He must remember to drop that final "g," but there are times . . .) "I fancied the two were spooning a bit. Really, you know, I'm quite overcome by it. I really am, I assure you!" Horace had no need to assure them. He offered his hand to the Honorable Almeric in a manner eloquently overcome.

"I've made her awf'ly happy," murmured the latter, forbearing to rise. "Rippin' little sort. Goin' about thinkin' all over the place."

"Thinkin' of the great future," responded Horace quickly, feeling that this sort of thing should be extenuated.

"Oh, how that we all feel so much delight over that great future!" This adorably from the Comtesse, her glance warming brother Horace. "And when is the time of the ceremony of this beautiful marriage?"

"Yes, when?" echoed Horace.

The Earl of Hawcastle appeared to consider this for the first time, and with a large, vague carelessness.

"Oh, the date? I dare say within a year,—two years."

The Comtesse flashed him a curiously flickering glance. Horace was frankly disappointed.

"Oh, but I say, you know, isn't that putting it jolly far off? The thing is settled, isn't it? Why not say a month instead of a year?"

"Oh, if you like," responded his lordship amiably. "I dare say there's no real objection."

The Comtesse prettily clapped her hands, flashing another glance at his lordship in which the curious might have read frank admiration.

"But I do like, indeed!" returned Horace hurriedly. "Why not let them marry here in Italy?"

"Ah, the dashing methods of you Ameri-

cans! Next you'll be saying, 'Why not here at Sorrento?' "

"Well, and why not, indeed? And why should it not be in a fortnight?"

His lordship was plainly in no mood to make more than a humorous resistance to such ardor.

"Ah, you wonderful people, you are whirlwinds. Yet I see no reason why it should not be in a fortnight." Here his lordship managed a goading glance at his finely impassive son. "Almeric to be sure is all impatience."

The Honorable Almeric contrived a slightly more erect posture in his chair and raised one hand in what was meant to be an ardent gesture. "Quite so, Governor! Quite so!"

"You see," continued his lordship. "I am taken off my feet by these impetuous young people." He permitted himself a moment's facetious yet slightly cooler calculation. "Then shall we dispose at once of the necessary little details, the—er—various minor arrangements, the—the settlement?" He interrupt-

ed himself with a friendly display of awkwardness, though still beaming upon Horace. "Of course, as a man of the world, of *our* world, you understand there *are* those annoying formalities in the way of a settlement—that sort of thing."

"But of course, of course," replied Horace eagerly. "Quite so, I know certainly, certainly—a settlement."

"Beastly bore, all that sort of thing," murmured the expectant fiancé.

"We'll have no difficulty about that, my boy," put in his lordship heartily. "I'll communicate with my solicitor at once, and he'll be ready to come on when we need him."

"Ripping, ripping!" exclaimed Horace. "And I'll cable our own solicitor, in the States, you know—Ethel's man of business—Kokomo, Indiana, where our Governor lived. I mean to say, he's a sort of guardian of hers."

It could not be said that his lordship flinched

at the word, yet it left him thoughtful. "A sort of guardian— *What* sort?"

Horace was reassuring. "Some bally old duffer of a lawyer. Never saw him that I know of. You see we've been on this side so much and there's been no occasion for the fellow to look us up, but he's never opposed anything we wrote for. Seems to be an easy-going old chap."

"But would his consent to your sister's marriage—or the matter of the settlement—be a necessity?"

"I dare say, but if he has the slightest sense of my sister's welfare this old Mr. Pike couldn't oppose the alliance, could he? He would be the first to welcome it, wouldn't he?"

"Most certainly he would—the idea!" This from Lady Creech with authority. "How could he not?" She seemed to bridle at a supposititious solicitor who might insanely prove obdurate. The Earl of Hawcastle once again breathed without restraint. He grasped the

willing hand of his young friend, as the little group moved toward the hotel.

"Then my solicitor can meet your man here, the two will spend an evening over a lot of musty papers and the thing will be done. Again my boy, I welcome you to our family. God bless you!"

"I'm overpowered, you know—I'm really overpowered!" Thus Horace as he loitered toward the sparkling sea-view with an expectant glance toward the Comtesse de Champigny who was now with a most engaging fervor lingering to press his lordship's hand in the American fashion.

"You are superb!" she said with conviction. His lordship glanced toward the retreating brother. He drew a long breath and in his eyes was another sparkle to enliven this shining day. "Let him know," he said crisply, "that it's to be a hundred and fifty thousand pounds." For even in the glow of this great moment the fond father would neglect no one of those details

so important to the process of transforming an American girl into a noble lady. "A hundred and fifty thousand pounds, remember!"

"My friend, truly you inspire reverence," purled the Comtesse. She flung her charming laugh ahead to the waiting Horace.

CHAPTER II

PIKE OF KOKOMO

Availing himself of even the little we have learned about the stupendous mysteries of electricity, Horace Granger-Simpson had caused certain breaches in a current of that fluid at Sorrento which almost immediately became intelligible in a remote city that he preferred not to think about. Indeed, by reason of other mysteries—of that grotesque fiction, Time—his inspired words performed a prodigy of fleetness, caught and passed the time of day somewhere along the bed of an ocean and were being read in Kokomo, Indiana, even before his eager pencil had hurried them on to paper—if we are to take time from mere clocks.

But alas! for the vanished sparkle! The

fateful words had resumed their identity, after a terrific adventure as dots and dashes, in a clime where the sparkle is likely to be dulled in this month of December. Kokomo lay under a gray sky through which a sullen and reluctant sun would cast the palest of rays, and these only after beclouded intervals of chill and damp. Yet along its main thoroughfare its inhabitants braved the wintry mist in a vivacious bustle of Saturday afternoon shopping, all unconscious that their climate would never for a moment be tolerated by the captious inn-keepers of Southern Italy. Indeed, when they spoke of the day at all these benighted ones spoke cheerfully, perhaps as to how the time still promised well for winter wheat, and sordid matters of that sort. Doubtless few of them paused to compare their climate to its disadvantage with that of any other climate on earth, even when the sun, pallid as another moon if seen at all, seemed to smoulder definitely out and the mist thickened to

sheer gloom. And it is almost as good as certain that in all that thriving interior metropolis there was but one person who at that moment thought of faraway Sorrento. This person had lately thought of it often. And now on the spot where the winged words of brother Horace had come to rest, he was intensely thinking of it again. Let us be at him!

On the second floor of a certain rather unmodish but substantial looking bank building the third door to the right bears on its dusty upper half, which is of opaque glass, the black-lettered announcement,

DANIEL VOORHEES PIKE

ATTORNEY-AT-LAW

(ESTATE OF JOHN SIMPSON)

A small card placed at the lower right-hand corner of the glass supplemented this legend with the entreaty, "Come in—don't knock." One figures timid consultants pausing formally

before that door in the past, in numbers sufficient to prompt this time-saving device. Without knocking, then, we enter the office of him who was perhaps at that very moment (if we believe in clocks) at a point far over the earth's curve, being rather sketchily described to the profoundly interested Earl of Hawcastle as—we believe "bally old duffer" was the neatest of the phrases.

The apartment is large and well lighted—for that kind of day in Kokomo—by two windows overlooking the street. High shelves line two sides, packed with a fearsome monotony of those calf-bound volumes of the law and statutes in such cases made and provided—those musty, juiceless records of litigation tried and for the most part happily forgotten. The remaining wall surface is a dull gray. On the exposed side opposite the books a crack in the plaster wavers from some point concealed by a steel engraving of Daniel Webster well down and across the wall's surface, sending a branch

line to where a bedizened calendar of the days has been nailed up, passing thence under a large wall-map of the world and so on until it meets a window that lets such light as may be abroad in upon a littered desk. A revolving chair is before this desk, a chair with a treacherous look because of its leaning superstructure. Three other chairs grace the room, or rather, occupy fractions of its floor space. They all look durable enough, but none would invite a lounger. There is a filing cabinet, a typewriter, a safe, looking highly important, as the meanest safe always does, and the somewhat battered bust of a famous American statesman on a shelf. This effigy has been desecrated by an unkempt derby hat tilted rakishly over the left brow, causing the famous American statesman to leer with a foul and dissolute foppishness. Over all, as may be observed with half an eye, has fallen a gentle rain of dust which is but rarely disturbed by a certain aged freedman who shuffles in each night

to empty the waste-paper basket and put the chairs back in their places. Should his attention by chance be called to the accumulation of dust he perjures himself before high heaven that the place was dustless but two days before, incidentally boasting a rheumatic diathesis that has intrigued not only the entire medical profession of the city but countless lay experts of his own race. And, truth to tell, the place has but the moderate dustiness and untidiness that in this curious profession testifies to prosperity. The aggressively neat law-office argues but a hopeful beginning, when there is still a barren leisure in which to worry about appearances. An ordinarily acute brother professional entering this office for the first time would instantly have perceived its disorder to be mere well-remunerated laxness, miles this side of the squalor that tells of failure and achieved penury.

The sole occupant of the room, if we may trust brother Horace, is not the man we seek.

Even at a casual glance he is no bally old duffer. Younger than that, whatever else he may be, a tall, rangy person with a long, oldish-young face under a shock of faintly glowing hair now rumpled to an untidiness in key with his environment. He stands musingly between the littered desk and the rather begrimed window, his feet well apart, his shoulders up but his head bent over the message we have followed, the sheet stretched between a thumb and finger of each hand. Yet the eyes are not upon the type-written words. It had been an astounding message and after fifty staring perusals he already knew each of its fifty or so words. The eyes follow the lines of the room, absently, slowly, resting now and again upon some familiar bit of its furnishing, yet with nothing of comprehension in the glance. Even when his eyes halted upon so piquant an item as the outraged bust of the American statesman—the hat had been his own and now eloquently elucidated his opinion of the states-

man—his gaze remained blank. Slowly he twice paced the length of the room, his head bowed, his eyes profoundly troubled. A moment he drooped above the desk to stare moodily at a half-written letter. He drew the revolving chair toward him as if about to sit for the completion of this task, then straightened from the desk, crossed the room and stared intently at the map of the world there displayed; a dull expanse of a world neatly bisected through Russia, China and India, flatly giving the lie to the celebrated projection of Mr. Mercator. There were many lines instructively traversing this map, but one of them had very apparently been added by an amateur geographer. This was now receiving earnest attention. It had been drawn with a blunted blue pencil, giving it a scale on the map not enjoyed by the most favored of railways and quite absurdly incommensurate with its importance. It started in London, proceeded straight to Paris with a fine disregard for

physical possibilities, and thereafter zigzagged to the more attractive loitering-places of continental Europe. Ostend was at the end of a branch, the main line continuing from Paris to Nice, whence it lost itself along the Italian Riviera. Biarritz and Homburg the blue pencil had found; again from Paris the line pushed eastward to Switzerland where, after distinguishing many points of interest with its stain, it shot to the south and most sturdily passed the Alps into Italy once more. Here it added its blue to certain lakes in the hills, and was presently to be observed touching Milan, after which Venice, Florence, Rome and Naples were met. From the latter city a broad straight line led across a corner of the bay to where it quite obscured a tiny dot declared by the map to be Sorrento.

There this curious road had abruptly stopped the month before. The blue pencil had been idle ever since a letter with the Sorrento postmark had directed that certain remittances

should until further notice be forwarded to the Hotel Regina Margherita at that point. The observer stared a long time at this feat of topographical daring and with an interest remarkably fresh considering that he knew all its divigations as a seasoned golfer knows his favorite links. Presently, after a prolonged and especially absorbed, almost dreaming gaze at his Sorrentine terminal, he with deep feeling called some unnamed person a fool and strode briskly again to the littered desk. This time he came to rest in the revolving chair (which shrieked and tottered ominously as it took his weight), pushed to remoter outskirts the litter of papers on the desk top and resumed the letter he had begun to write there an hour before. While he writes hurriedly yet haltingly, with intervals of troubled gazing into space, it is our task to consider him more intimately for in a very few minutes the letter will be done and he will sign it, "Yours truly, D. V. Pike," in the plainest of writing.

Too obviously brother Horace is describing him to a belted Earl under the most flagrant misapprehensions. He is thirty at the most—perhaps an oldish thirty, due to the too early discovery that life is both real and earnest. And probably even so untrained an observer as brother Horace, scanning him at this moment, would have rejected the term "duffer" for one more plausible. There is no lack of shrewdness and competence expressed in his face, a face illumined now and then as he writes by flashes of a sort of humorous dismay. The letter is finished. He thrusts the pen into a low glass cup of shot—size No. 6 and corroded with ink these many years—leans back in the revolving chair, which screeches in agony, and swings absently from side to side through the space his knees may move beneath the desk.

From the blank wall his eyes fall to a photograph which until this moment has formed a unit in the desk's litter. He brings this for-

ward and his eyes lighten at the familiar lines of a young girl's face. The eyes return his look—that photographer's trick!—serious eyes in a face entirely serious, for which possibly the photographer is again at fault for the face is eloquent of quite other capacities. One could foresee its smile, even its laugh, the sleek chin trembling, the firm lips relaxing, while the nose— Many pleasant things could be said of the nose; there is an engaging informality about its lines—including a barely perceptible tilt—that promises an able coöperation when the laugh comes.

The man's voice sounded alarmingly again in the room's stillness and the words "You fool!" were repeated with the profoundest conviction. Assuredly they were not addressed to the photograph; the glance at that bore too much of tenderness—of a certain tender resignation that would be still wistful in spite of itself. Perhaps this very persistence evoked the epithet. Whoever it was directed against,

it was not the girl of the photograph, even though her blouse was of an atrocious pattern demoded these three years, the coiffure almost rudely archaic and even though Miss Ethel Granger-Simpson herself, happily ignorant of the existence of this print—and, above all, ignorant of its present ownership—would have frankly pronounced it absurd.

The photograph was laid carefully aside. "You conglomerated idiot," added the convinced voice of Pike, continuing this crude essay at character analysis. "You might have known—all the time!" He eased the complaining chair of its burden and stood at one of the windows idly watching the lively street below him. The throngs were denser now that the afternoon was drawing in. With a momentarily cordial eye he surveyed the hurrying men and women. He knew those people; he liked them and he was one of them. Especially did he like the town. Once it had seemed a tremendous, an unattainable city to

him. That was when, a wide-eyed country boy, he had studied law in the nearest village and dreamed of this metropolis as something too splendid for him. It was still a city to him, still splendid though he had gained it. Among the quick-moving figures on the pavement below, it pleased him now to fancy himself as he had walked there nearly ten years before, wide-gazing, alert yet entranced, on his way to this very office where he had quickly become John Simpson's trusted subordinate—his right hand, as Simpson said—and eventually his closest friend. Here he had become an adept in the mystic rites of the law, and here honors and riches—in a country way of speaking—had come to him. Already at thirty his counsel was prized by the judicious. And already what he regarded as a supreme distinction had been thrust upon him, nothing less than membership in the legislature of his sovereign state. Things had come about for him wonderfully, he now reflected. But he

had been a fool indeed to suspect that things would continue to come about in the same wonderful way, to believe, however timidly, that his wildest dream of all would of necessity become a lasting fabric. Some ideals there must be too glorious for achievement—being merely meant to delude fools to dreaming. Well, he had been an easy victim, had dreamed to the utmost of folly, if *that* were any satisfaction to the Schemer of Things. Now he would cease from the futile and try to do for John Simpson what he himself would have done. With a last muttered "Fool!" as if to close the incident, he returned to the desk to read over the letter he had finished. And now, as he addresses an envelope to "Hon. James G. Cooley, vice-Consul U. S. A., London, England," we shall do well to read the letter as yet unsealed.

DEAR JIM:

You probably know that when Mr. Simpson died three years ago he left everything in my charge; the

estate and the children. Well, the estate has been mighty easy managing, hardly any work to it, but that pair of Simpson brats have had me losing sleep more than once. You know how the old man always wanted them to have the best they could get in education, sent them abroad to school, and all that. Now it looks as if they had got to like Europe so well they are going to stay there. Maybe that is all right too and near enough to what the old man would have wanted for them. The boy, thank God, I'm not any longer responsible for because he got to be twenty-one six or seven months ago. But I've got to be the girl's guardian for another year, and so that is why I am writing this letter to you. Honestly, Jim, I'm afraid I haven't done my duty by those kids, letting them wander around loose that way—especially the girl. You see this is how it is. She and her brother got hooked up some way in London about a year ago with an English widow-lady named Creech—Lady Creech, her title is, so I guess she is someone, all right, and she seemed to sort of take Ethel, Miss Simpson, under her wing. Anyway they have been travelling about a whole lot in Europe and I gather that this English party is getting her bit every month for playing the chaperone. Well, "so far so good, if not better," as the old man used to say. But now it seems the old lady has a nephew, one Almeric St. Aubyn, who will be the Earl of Hawcastle when his father dies, and Ethel Simpson has become engaged to marry him. The whole party, including the father, who is not dead yet, are at an Italian town

called Sorrento, which is down toward the ankle of the boot-leg on the left-hand side as you look at the map. You can see it plain enough on any good map. I received a cable-message from the boy today giving me the glad tidings and requesting me to show up there right off for some reason. Something about a settlement, he says, but I can't make out what he means. At first it looked as if I just couldn't possibly get away from here—work enough to keep two men busy—but I got to thinking over it and I've kept thinking over it all afternoon and now I reckon there's only one thing to do and that is to go. I see I'll have to ease my conscience for letting those children knock around alone so long. I sure haven't been any prize guardian up to date. And how do I know that this girl is getting in right? Of course the chances are she is, because I think she's one to make a wise choice—she has so much of John Simpson's good common sense in her little head. But I couldn't feel easy if I let it go at that, and so I'm leaving on the very first steamboat I can catch, to make as sure as I can that the kid is getting a fair deal. Probably I will be away at least a month. Lord! won't it seem funny, when for ten years I've hardly been able to get farther away from the old town than a two-dollar excursion would take me. I shall sail for Naples, which is where you get off to go to this town of Sorrento. Well, now this is what I want you to do for me, Jim. You will know how to set about it. Get a line for me on these English parties, this Hawcastle family, father and son. Give

it to me cold, if you can, just who they are and what their standing is. Find out everything about the son that you think the old man would have wanted to know about anyone who was going to marry his girl. As I say, I haven't the least doubt that everything is all right, but I want to be certain, especially because I don't believe the best man in the world would be any too good for this girl. Now, Jim, get a hustle on and try to have a letter for me at the Hotel Regina Margherita at this town of Sorrento, Italy, by the time I get there, and greatly oblige——

The letter is sealed and stamped. And now Pike reaches again into the desk litter and withdraws a steamship folder in which he scans for a moment the date of a certain sailing for Naples. This item absorbed he casts aside the folder for the photograph and the eyes again meet his. "You laminated old fool!" he says—and then, "Good luck to you—you little child!"

CHAPTER III

VON GROLLERHAGEN OF NOWHERE

After that chilling interlude, mercifully brief, under the leaden skies of Kokomo, we are again privileged to bask in the glowing garden of the Hotel Regina Margherita. It is eleven o'clock on the morning of a day some two weeks after we were last refreshed by its bland airs and ornate greenery. A few exulting tourists loiter in its shaded aisles or loll in wicker chairs along the balustrade, steeping in this gracious sunlight and rendering thanks, it may be, for their release from ruder climes.

About the broad terrace are tables and wicker chairs invitingly grouped and one infers that a few favored mortals have chosen to

breakfast here, for young Michele, who hopes by years of faithful service one day to inherit the powers and title of old Mariano, maître d'hôtel, is now deftly disembarrassing two of the tables of their burden of used dishes and linen. At a little distance old Mariano himself is achieving the perfectly appointed breakfast table for a pair who have not yet appeared. Michele at his humbler task contrives little oblique surveys of his superior's craft, noting the proper bestowal of the napery, the perfect alignment of the silver, the skilled adjustment of the china, the choicely composed array of fruit. He secretly believes himself to be already Mariano's equal in these minor mysteries of correct table-laying but he knows full well that only the years can bring him Mariano's flawless dignity of bearing and that look of slightly worried but competent importance which Mariano wears, not only when hungry guests consult him as to food but even now when, quite unobserved by clients, he

earnestly strives for the higher planes of artistry.

Mariano is a little man, elderly and rather stout, his swarthy, clean-shaven face relaxing to a marked affability at non-creative moments. His dress clothes with white waistcoat and black tie are scrupulously correct. Michele reflects that this formal garb is much preferable to his own, of which though his coat is a dress-coat in form, it is blue in color with brass buttons, the trousers blue with crimson braid at the sides and the waistcoat narrowly striped with red and blue. Though he intensely admires this color scheme, Michele suspects that its gayety retards his progress. He is piqued also by the circumstance that Mariano invariably mutters to himself when engaged as now. The lips move rapidly and continuously as the master briskly achieves his entrancing effects. Even the tones are wafted to Michele, but the words, alas! are fatally blurred. Michele would like much to know the precise words Mariano

so interestedly addresses to himself at such times. He fancies they may be vital, of some charmed significance to the craft. He resolves to mutter to himself hereafter at odd moments —one never knows! Having now cleared his tables he places the last napkin on the piled tray and reaches for his burden. Mariano, a fist at either side of his generous waist, now surveys his completed work. He still mutters to himself. His look of fond approval clouds to a passing frown as he steps forward to slide the fruit dish half an inch further toward the Bay of Naples. With a final glance Michele holds the loaded tray well aloft on his chest and leans as far back as seems safe, artlessly hoping that his pronounced slenderness may thus suggest what we shall—avoiding harsher terms—call Mariano's equatorial convexity. Thus gallantly contorted he makes his way to the hotel entrance, but here he unbends, quite literally, so that he may indicate to an inquiring stranger the whereabouts of Mariano.

The trained eyes of the latter, however, are already engaged, and he comes quickly forward to greet the newcomer. He is not effusive—Mariano is never your gushing sort—but he has perceptibly unbent and it is not difficult to see that he greets the trim, alert young Frenchman in the well-made English walking-suit with unfeigned cordiality.

"Always the same Mariano!" Here the newcomer deposited upon one of the cleared tables a rather important looking correspondence case of stamped black leather, and smiled agreeably.

"Ah! and always the same Monsieur Ribière, so good to see. Last night I thought of you—today you are here. That seems, one would almost say——"

But the doubtless profound speculations of Mariano upon this coincidence were forever shattered by a rich peal of Italian song with stringed accompaniment from the nearby garden gate. His face suffused with honest rage,

he turned to threaten the performers with fist and foot and to shout, "Silenzio!" It is an excellent word for shouting, a roomy word that will hold much heat. Mariano from constant practice, uttered it terribly, then instantly smiled again upon him he had addressed as Monsieur Ribière.

"May I hope that Monsieur still occupies the exalted position of secretary to Monseigneur the Grand Duke——"

"Ssh!" An eloquent finger lay across the lips of Ribière. "We will speak English if you please"—he indicated the presence of two lounging tourists by the balustrade—"there are not so many who understand; also, if you please, we shall not mention the name or rank of my employer."

Mariano groaned; his gesture and accent were those of acute despair. "So again incognito? Every year he will come to this our hotel for two-three day, but always that incognito!" He flourished protesting hands and ably

shrugged his sense of injury. "We lose the honor to have it known. Like that!"

"But what will you?" Ribière shrugged in turn, then deftly did a bit of coiling with the ends of his small dark mustache. "Strictly incognito remember you, as on the former visits of my employer. He comes to arrive presently in his automobile from Naples. It is understood that he shall be addressed as Herr von Grollerhagen."

"Herr von Grollerhagen!" Cautiously Mariano recited the lesson.

"He wishes to be thought a German."

To Mariano this must have seemed sheer waywardness, yet he controlled himself to merely humorous disparagement. "But, my God! a German! And why a German? Such a droll caprice! *Excentrique,* ha!"

"You have said it, my friend." Ribière paused on the edge of gossip, visibly wavered, fell. "You have truly said. Listen between ourselves. A man of caprice? But only last

night in the hotel at Naples he talk in a chance way to a very singular North American that find himself there. The evening he talk, he laugh with this remarkable native. But say, then! Figure yourself that today he have that same North American native as companion with him in his automobile. Assure yourself I remonstrate sharply, but what use? He laugh for half an hour at my care."

Mariano vigorously sighed his sympathy. A caprice indeed!

"Ah, his Highness is so affable. He must know many persons even as queer as North Americans. Not like those cousin of his at St. Petersburg and Moscowa! And yet, though Monseigneur is so good, so generoso, will not the anarchist strike against even the name of royalty. You have not the fear?"

"I have. He has not. I take what precaution I can secretly from him." The expression of Monsieur Ribière was profoundly serious. One suspected that he would never be less than

profoundly serious, even when performing the least significant of his duties. From the correspondence case on the table he now withdrew a small notebook in which he prepared to write. "You have but few guests, I trust?"

"Hardly one dozen in the whole house. It is so early in the season. Those poor musician,"—he nodded genially toward the disturbers he had so lately silenced—"they wait always at every gate to play and sing when they see anyone come, but not often they see. The most part of our guests are English of one party."

"Good! Who are these English?"

Mariano became voluble, allotting each of the persons he named to one of the spreading fingers of his left hand. "There is Milor', an English Excellency—the Earl of Hawcastle; there is his son, the Excellency Honorabile Almeric St. Aubyn; there is Miladi Creesche, an English Miladi who is sister-by-marriage to the Milor' Hawcastle. But when I say all are

English, I forget badly. Those three only. Then is an American Signorina, Mees Granger-Seempsone. Miladi Creeshe travel with her to be dowager on guard, I think. She is young, *generoso,* give the money to everyone, Oh, *multa bella,* so pretty, such charm—" He had lost himself in that maze of a rhapsody.

Ribière, puzzled, drew him back.

"You speak now of Lady Creech?"

Mariano gasped blankly, then emitted an unnecessary number of denials.

"Oh, no, no, no, no, no! Miladi Creeshe is old lady. Not hear well. Deaf." Mariano here tapped both his ears informingly. "And gloomy! No *pourboires,* nothing. I spoke of the young lady, Mees Granger-Seempsone, who the English Honorabile son of Milor' Hawcastle is about to espouse, I think." Mariano beamed roguishly.

"Who else is there?" demanded the ever-serious Ribière, his pencil again poised above his notebook.

"Two others. The brother of Mees Granger-Seempsone, a young gentleman of America. He make the eyes all day at another lady who is of the party, a French lady, Madame la Comtesse de Champigny. Ha, ha! That amuse me so much." Again Mariano beamed roguishly upon his companion. Almost he leered.

"And why?" Ribière remained insensible to this gayety.

Mariano, after glancing about him, discreetly went forward, lowering his voice. "Bekoss I think that Comtesse de Champigny is a such good friend of the ol' English Milor' Hawcastle." He laid a finger along his nose, the lid of his left eye quivered with intimations. "A maître d'hôtel see many things. I think that Milor' and the Comtesse know each other from long time, perhaps. See, I set that table for their *déjeuner.*" Mariano had relished his gossip and he was now not unwilling that Ribière should glance approvingly at

the table to which he had given his thought. But the latter kept his eyes on his notebook.

"Good! No Russians, then?"

"No Russians, yet I think Milor' Hawcastle and that Comtesse de Champigny have sometime been in Russia." Not above prolonging the gossip was Mariano when the time and the listener favored it.

Ribière had risen and replaced the notebook in the correspondence case, though he lingered to ask, "Why?"

"Bekoss twice, three times, I hear them spik Russian to each ozzer."

"Is that all?" Ribière seemed to find this negligible. "I think there is small chance they will recognize my employer; his portrait is little known."

"And this North American who come with Monseigneur in the automobile," demanded Mariano, "does he know what great one he travel beside?"

"But no—not more than the baby which is not borned."

"Ah!" Mariano lifted to heaven eyes eloquent of this monstrous drollery. Ribière briskly consulted his watch.

"Set *déjeuner* on the terrace instantly when they arrive; a small fish you have, yes; the little peas, iced figs, tea. I will bring his own caviar and vodka from the supplies I carry."

"I set for one?"

"For two. But yes. He desires that the North American shall breakfast with him. And do not forget, my friend—"—Ribière's manner became impressive to an extreme—"do not forget that the incognito must be absolute."

"Ah-ha! But I heard and I know that and I do not forget." Briefly Mariano experienced the irritation that follows a careless aspersion of one's professional honor, yet this was swiftly washed out by his large enjoyment of the jest in question. "Va bene, signore," he called to the briskly vanishing Ribière. "The Herr von

Grollerhagen shall be well served in all things —a German gentleman, but yes. Ha, ha!"

He turned to choose a table proper to the expected guest. "Von Grollerhagen,—von Groller Hagen—von Grollerhagen." He practised the name as he set about his new task. It had a novel effect in his throat, seeming to thrill certain vocal chords whose existence he had not hitherto suspected.

"Von Grollerhagen—von Grollerhagen—"

Approached from the hotel the aspiring Michele, soft of foot, stealthy when he saw the lips of Mariano at play.

"Now perhaps I shall hear what he says to himself," he thought. Nearer he drew, still unobserved, and then he heard. "Dio mio!" he muttered fervently, and crossed himself. "It is then a charm that he utters the whole time," and strenuously he shaped his lips to whisper the fearsome word.

CHAPTER IV

SOME WIT AS TO DONKEYS

Meanwhile let us overtake a certain engaged couple as they canter along that scenic delight known as the Amalfi drive. Opportunely they pull their mounts to a walk as we reach them, the Honorable Almeric St. Aubyn, superbly accoutered for the back of a horse, and captive in his train, as it were, a maiden of the barbarous but affluent tribe of the North Americans, though the latter is patently a more than willing captive and has bedecked herself with considerable finesse to the end that she may appear fair in the languid eyes of her lord. Both of them pointedly ignore a bit of the world's most gratifying scenery. Not for them the boldly jutting hills with their mount-

ing terraces of vine, the up-flung orchards of olive and orange and lemon, the latter with thrilling gleams of gold amid their verdure; nor for them the Mediterranean's lazy splendor as it swells in living jade and turquoise to the base of the cliff along which their road adventures. The Honorable Almeric, as he himself might put it, has never been "keen" on scenery, and Miss Ethel Granger-Simpson is still so engrossed with that far view of a full life that has come to her that mere spectacles in topography leave her untouched. Indeed, at this moment she is rather more than usually absorbed, a curiously brooding absorption, for she more than once glances at her companion with eyes that simply do not see him. She had already found that when alone with her suitor her opportunities for meditation were abundant, so infrequently did he address her. Like so many men who have engaged the world's notice for their deeds he was endowed with a rare gift for silence.

And now, as more than once since the beautiful adventure had been officially determined upon, the girl found herself in a mood of curiously dry reflection, due possible to a marked difficulty in identifying the youth at her side with the remote great dead of his line. She was never so cold as to question or to doubt, though a stubborn sense of unreality would sometimes oppress her in the young man's presence, and strange to say, most often at those moments when he chose to talk, for again, like that of certain of the world's great men, his speech was not scintillating. But the shining bare fact was ever there to dazzle her. Had she not thumbed to her soul's profit a copy of Burke's Peerage, generously conferred upon her by dear Lady Creech only a week before? And had she not obtained and almost breathlessly conned the "Chronicles" of Froissart wherein the men of St. Aubyn were shown to have won no small share of the undying glory of Crécy and Agincourt? And was not her

affianced veritably a St. Aubyn? That very morning, suddenly thoughtful, she had said to brother Horace, appealingly, almost wistfully, "You're fond of Almeric, aren't you, Hoddy? You do *truly* admire him, don't you?" It had not occurred to the young man that she was rather pathetically inviting the reassurance of certain vague, troubled stirrings in her mind. Indeed she herself would have denied this. And happily brother Horace had given her the comfort she did not dream she sought.

"Why, of course," he had said. "Think of all he represents!"

She had become enthusiastic at once.

"Indeed I do think of that. Crusaders' blood flows in his veins. It is to the nobility that *must* be within him that I've plighted myself." Certainly she must have been unconscious of the slight emphasis with which she freighted the word "must" in this speech.

"Of course, Sis! It's the greatest thing that ever happened." He had paused in renewed

wonder, then continued with a fine quality of simple marvelling in his tones, "Doesn't it seem impossible that we were born in Indiana!" For the moment he had appeared quite overcome by this incredible circumstance.

She had marvelled briefly with him, then exclaimed, "But isn't it good, Hoddy, that the Pater 'made his pile' as the Americans say and let us come over here when we were young—let us come to find the nobler things, Hoddy, the nobler things!"

And brother Horace had responded with the simplicity of profound emotion.

"The nobler things, Sis, the nobler things! Why, just think, when old Hawcastle dies I'll be saying to fellows, quite off-hand, you know, 'My sister, the Countess of Hawcastle—' " He had broken off in the stress of his ecstacy. And she had then sought comforting assurance from him on another point.

"And Hoddy, you don't suppose that father's friend, my guardian, this old Mr. Pike

who may be here at any moment now, will be,—will be *queer,* do you?"

The brother had again displayed a matchless optimism.

"Well, the Governor himself was rather raw, you know. This chap is probably a harmless enough old duffer—easy to handle. Trust me, I'll have him in his proper place ten seconds after I see him. He'll hardly be a match for *me,* I think. And if he's too impossibly queer we'll simply have to keep him out of the way."

"I wish I knew," she had replied. "It would be dreadful to have Almeric's family think we had queer connections of any sort—even in a horrid business way—and this person might turn out to be quite shockingly American." She had concluded with a note of genuine pathos, "I—I couldn't bear it, Hoddy!" And now, as she rode, she was suddenly again troubled in thought by this imminent unknown. Her thoughts rushed from ancient fields of

battle where various St. Aubyns performed feats of engaging valor back to the present to worriedly ponder the advent of a certain "old Mr. Pike." She hoped, Oh, fervently she hoped—and would have prayed had she been of an earlier generation—that he might prove to be "a gentleman of the old school," one with neat gray side-whiskers, ceremoniously clad in garments of black broadcloth, not modish of cut, to be sure, but with an old-fashioned flow of line not ungraceful, a gentleman profoundly courteous, not to say deferential to persons like the Earl of Hawcastle and Lady Creech, who would glow benevolently, yet a bit timidly upon the Honorable Almeric (being ever acutely aware of the difference in their stations and their pasts) and who would rather prettily call her "My dear" and felicitate her in stately phrases upon the wisdom of her choice among men—in accents not rawly enough American to actually shame one, even in the presence of an English nobleman.

Elatedly she drew this picture of old Mr. Pike. She went over it to add details—a heavy and dignified seal ring on the left hand, a handsome rumpled crest of white hair, an impressive bearing, almost a *manner,* and so kind, so sympathetic, so artlessly overjoyed that she, the simple American girl, should have reached this eminence. She was dramatizing the old gentleman by this time. He gave her away at the altar, furtively wiping a suspicious moisture from his kind old eyes. Afterwards, as he drew her to him to kiss, which he did with a spice of old-world gallantry, he would say, "My child, I never had a daughter, but if Heaven had favored me with one—" Of course his emotion overcame him here. What he had meant to say was that if Heaven had vouchsafed him a daughter as fair as this he could never have wished for her a greater happiness than to marry a son of the Earl of Hawcastle. But she had understood him and gently patted his arm and called him a silly old dear. By this

time she was feeling a rather rugged American pride in the dear old survival of a courtlier day, but she was here recalled—at the moment of accepting his final blessing—by the voice of her fiancé.

"Silly lookin' jossers—what!" She glanced up to find that he indicated—quite frankly with his riding-crop—two passing members of Italy's most ornate police body who saluted as they passed. "Silly lookin' jossers, I say," he insisted, for the girl's mind, scarce recalled by his speech, had been inclined to revert to her ingenuously idealized guardian, further to adorn and enhance him, it may be, with tender graces of manner.

"And more of the beggars there ahead, a bit excited, too, by Jove."

They rode on to where three of the carabiniere consulted mysteriously at the mouth of a ravine, while a fourth explored its depths. On the hillside above the brilliant uniform of another was seen to flit among the olive trees.

"Seem to be havin' no end of a row," continued the Honorable Almeric as they passed this group. "I say, there's another of the silly beggars on ahead. Ask him what the deuce and all the row's about, there's a good girl. I mean to say—perhaps it's a bit of excitement."

"Of course I'll ask him; they seem to be searching for someone or something." She ceased to embellish old Mr. Pike; she thrilled pleasantly at the thought of rendering this St. Aubyn a service. The next carabiniere—he seemed to have been posted at the foot of some ancient stone steps that here led up the hillside—saluted graciously as the pair drew rein before him and exuded a smiling amiability when he was addressed in his native tongue by the most beautiful Signorina. Being apprised of her desire for facts, he forthwith imparted them unstintedly and with an abundant sense of the dramatic, gallantly with thumb and finger accentuating the fierceness of his sable

mustache as he recited. The Honorable Almeric became justifiably impatient under this flow of a language that had won neither his esteem nor any studious attention.

"Silly gibberish!" he declared pithily as they rode on at his urgent solicitation, stopping the narrative at flood-tide. "Dare say they make a go of it, though I fancy you made little out of what that silly juggins was spoutin'."

"Oh, but I did, and it's quite exciting. They're out after an escaped bandit or desperado, or whatever you call it—only he's a Russian, so of course he's an anarchist or a nihilist or something of that sort."

"What ho! I say, but that's jolly; perhaps we'll see them give it him with those silly guns of theirs." The languid eyes were sparkling now. The old fighting-blood of St. Aubyn seemed definitely aroused.

"He was living on beyond there, at Salerno —he'd escaped from Siberia or some Russian place—and the Russian government found it

out and had the Italian government arrest him, and so then he got away from them, made his escape, you know, and now they think he's hiding somewhere along this road, but that officer told me not to be the least bit afraid because they have him surrounded and are bound to catch him again before nightfall."

"Silly country—lettin' such creatures loose along a public road. I say, we'd best be joggin' on a bit—desperate chaps those anarchists."

"I know I shouldn't be afraid," began the girl, but she was forced to put her horse to the gallop to regain her companion's side. Around the next winding of that beauteous road they both pulled up short. A hundred yards ahead of them was commotion, shouting, turmoil. Full in the road a dense cluster of peasants surged about the heart of the mystery, obscuring it for the moment from our observers.

"But it's the bandit fellow—those chaps

must have bagged him!" Thus the Honorable Almeric. Miss Granger-Simpson scanned the weaving group judicially.

"It must be something else—they're too jolly for that. See them laugh, and they're shouting so cheerfully. Surely they wouldn't be that jolly over a bandit." Her inference seemed just; there was much laughter from the ring of observers and shouts of encouragement for some hidden performer. Benevolent elder sisters were holding infants aloft and even these were brandishing grimy fists in patent delight. Then swiftly the group parted with a fine Latin gusto of exclamation, revealing to our pair the cause of their innocent pleasure.

Toiling up a rise in the road and dragging a disabled motor-car were two donkeys and a man. The car was large, of a sumptuous aspect, a wounded but still lordly leviathan towed by lesser fish and expressing humiliation and dismay in its every line. Nor was it yielding gracefully; it tugged and fought, hung back

with all its weight. The donkeys were earnest in their labors, small, mouse-colored, shaggy creatures with enormous heads and sad faces. The man, with an extemporized leather trace across his chest, tugged beside them, his capable shoulders pushed forward, his head bent. One observer, not a peasant, surveyed the scene from a foothold on the bank above the road with a lively and quite unaffected joy; a portly man of forty-five or so, though soldierly rather than fat, his doffed motoring-cap revealing reddish blond hair, brushed pompadour, and beginning to turn gray like his mustache and large full beard. His dress produced the effect rather of carelessness than of extreme fashion. He wore a travelling suit of gray, neat enough but rather too roomy and not recently enough pressed to win, for example, the rather difficult approval of the Honorable Almeric who is firm in such matters. His glance at the car was obviously one of careless ownership. His attitude toward the curiously as-

sorted beings that drew it was, as we have intimated, one of sheer delight. From one of the big slanting pockets of the long-tailed coat he drew a silver cigarette box and, lighting a cigarette, he mingled his cheers frankly with those of the enchanted peasantry as, after a nobly sustained effort the three panting beasts of burden brought their load to the top of the rise and to mercifully level ground. The artless children of the soil redoubled their shouts at this engaging feat. Their number was being constantly augmented. Across the neighboring fields and vineyards hurried late-comers, youth in the van, the aged plodding doggedly after. Many a seamed face lit up with delight, and more than one aged child of that laughter-loving race must have thanked God that he had been let to survive for the enjoyment of this delectable wonder.

Our betrothed pair had, despite their early qualms, drawn near to the maelstrom, near enough, alas! for Miss Granger-Simpson to

receive the rudest sort of shock in her then sensitive state, for the man of the panting trio now erected himself and called to the owner of the car on the bank above him. Entirely negligible his word or two, some note of encouraging promise as to future progress, but the voice of this unfastidious creature, this dustily absurd companion of donkeys, came cruelly to the girl as the American voice—not, mark you, as merely the voice of an American, of which there are many interesting and sometimes pleasing varieties. Noses may play tricks as anthropological data, but the American voice never misleads one after an adequate first hearing. The effect upon the girl was of course the more poignant because of her late successful struggle to picture one particular American as an irresistible old dear, in spite of his unpromising nativity. Rudely was she shaken back to a consciousness of the many chances against her old Mr. Pike being anything like the romantic figure she had so pleas-

antly projected. She suffered now a renewal of her old suspense as to the unknown guardian. In addition she suffered keenly at having the sensitive St. Aubyn to whom she was plighted suffer even this casual roadside encounter with one of the more wretchedly impossible types of her countrymen. For the moment she was humiliated for at least eighty or ninety million Americans as represented by this fantastic fellow of them who pulled cheerfully beside a pair of rather indignant mouse-colored donkeys and seemed not in the least to care what figure he might be cutting in the eyes of the foreigners and sensitive compatriots.

Swiftly she lowered her veil, detecting this fellow to be one of those who seem to believe that a sort of free-masonry should and does unite in the staunchest of fraternal bonds all Americans who find themselves abroad. She knew the way they would,—strangers until that moment—elatedly hail one another at sight.

She not only shuddered at her own danger but she sought to restrain the Honorable Almeric from too near an approach to this mortifying person. Even though her country was to be in a little while no longer hers, she still felt that she would like to have Almeric think not too slightly of it. But the latter, unheeding her call, had ridden to the edge of the crowd where he could closely observe the chief actor. Even he had readily identified the American voice and he now grinned lavishly at the speaker who, in turn, surveyed him with frankly pleased interest.

From where the girl had reined in her horse she could hear the hearty words of her fiancé as, after a brief survey of the scene, he called out to the man in bondage, "But there you are, old top,—three of you in a row—what!" She heard also the full, rich, honest laughter that the jest evoked from the speaker himself. She was too far off, however, to catch the American's reply, as he spoke in lower tones. She

was able to remark, though, that its effect upon the Honorable Almeric was instantly sobering; she could easily perceive, indeed, that he was puzzled by the retort she could not hear. Not so the owner of the car who at once astonishingly flung his cap into the air and fell to the sward apparently that he might laugh with more freedom. The Honorable Almeric rode slowly back, muttering in obvious bewilderment. The mountain-side was yet vocal with the crescendos of the large man's mirth as they turned their horses' heads back toward Sorrento. After half a mile's gallop the Honorable Almeric seemed to shrug off the bewilderment that had dazed him. They slowed to a walk, and he turned a sunny face to his companion.

"One of your American chaps, you know, Ethel."

The girl winced. "Oh, Almeric! Not *my* American chaps, please! You don't know how ashamed I was when I saw him—making that

sickening exhibition of himself. Positively I was furious."

"To be sure," he gallantly conceded, "I dare say you're not all that bounder's sort. You should have heard me chivvy him. I mean to say, directly I got there I saw a rippin' chance for a bit of chaff, so, like a flash, I said to him, 'Why, there you are, you know—three of you in a row!'—meanin' this bounder-chap and the two donkeys, do you see? Three of them in a row—what!" Once more he celebrated the quip with fresh, cordial laughter. Then bewilderment again clouded his face. "And a stupid beggar he was, too! Couldn't think of anything to say that had any meanin' to it—I'd got him so quick, do you see? And that silly ass up on the bank—the chap that owned the car, I take it—a slow duffer he was; took him a whole minute to see what a capital bit of chaffing I'd done. He didn't begin to laugh at all at what I'd said until the other chap took it so seriously with his silly answer.

Then he must have seen how I'd ragged him. Quite off his head with laughing he was, when I left. Dare say he can see a bit of spoofin' like that if you give him time. Stupid, your American chap, though. Didn't see a bit I was raggin' him—took it all quite serious, do you see—talkin' back in the most serious silly way!" And yet across the face of the speaker would now and again pass a shadow, faint perhaps, like the shadow of a summer cloud on a yellowing field, but unmistakable. He was still, it could be seen, vaguely troubled by something of sinister import in that serious, silly retort of the American chap.

"Thank Heaven," said the girl devoutly, "we've seen the last of them."

"Excitin' mornin', what! Russian bandit, American donkey!" Again the Honorable Almeric beamed with the satisfaction of one who has tilted in the tourney of wit and vanquished an inept opponent.

"Let's hurry," said the girl. "We shall be

starved." But it was not for hunger that she urged on her horse. Rather than incur further comment upon this disheartening countryman of hers she preferred to go swiftly and in silence so that she might in her mind return to the pleasant creation of dear old Mr. Pike who, though frankly an American, would conduct himself at all times as a gentleman should. *He* would never forget himself in that manner on a public highway. Perish the thought! A dozen times it perished in the five miles of hard riding.

Leaving the girl to this pleasant mental device and the Honorable Almeric to intermittent seasons of brooding wherein he again and again would suspect the innocence of that American chap's serious, silly retort, we may precede the pair to the terrace of the Hotel Regina Margherita.

Here at that table which Mariano first bedecked so skillfully this morning sit his lordship, the Earl of Hawcastle and Madame la

Comtesse de Champigny. His lordship gracefully adorns the flannel garments imposed upon one by this ardent sun. The Comtesse, as is her wont, makes a completed picture. Never is she a mere sketch. The last detail of chiffon, ribbon, gauze and plumage has been carefully wrought out. The pair conclude what has plainly been an agreeable repast. His lordship lights a cigarette, the Comtesse de Champigny prettily droops her slender hands above the bowl before her and barely touches her fine fingers to the water it holds. She smiles with an oblique little glance at her companion.

"He is so funny, that little American boy. I laugh so much at him—he thinks I laugh *with* him."

"You handled him well, Hélène, about the settlement, I mean." The Earl of Hawcastle smiled in sympathy with her.

"Poof! One did not find that difficult, my friend. A trifle of finesse, perhaps. But I

tell you, he required no 'handling.' He did all that handling himself—'one hundred feefty thousan' poun's! But really, chère Comtesse, how could my sister use that money to better advantage?' Like that, said he. And I say with very big eyes, 'Ah, my dear friend, how wise you are!' Then I go to laugh myself well, thinking of that beautiful son of yours for which she will pay so much."

"Ah, it's not for Almeric, though; it's for the sake of being the future Countess of Hawcastle. She has learned to value those things. My sister-in-law hasn't been her chaperone for a year for nothing. And, by Jove, she hasn't done it for nothing, either." His lordship laughed rather grimly. "But she's deserved all I shall allow her—every penny."

There is the faintest trace of coolness in the other's quickly uttered "Why?"

"But it was she who found these people, she who cultivated in them what we all agree is a very worthy ambition on their part, and, I need

not remind you, did all this at a time when there had come to be a very embarrassing need for it. You know as well as I do there would have been the devil to pay. Don't miss *that* essential. We were at the breaking point—if you like the words, a most damnable insolvency. And another thing, we might say that both you and I owe her something. Even a less captious respectability than Lady Creech's might have looked askance at the long, shall we say friendship, that has existed between us. Indeed, she has earned much." He arose and came to her side.

"But you are right, of course, my friend, so always you are. I forget many things," she sighed as the other lightly raised her hand to his lips. "Droll, is it not, so many things we have been let to forget?"

"And your own little American, Hélène—will he—has he——"

"Not yet, my friend, but it will be when I wish, that moment; I must but snap the

thumb and finger like that, as one says." Here the Comtesse indulged in dainty but effective pantomime, the snapped finger resounding so that Mariano conceived himself to be summoned from the distant doorway where he seemed anxiously to await a guest. Discovering his mistake he proceeded to effect minute changes in the positions of the equipment on an adjacent table, a table already showing signs of having been laid with unusual care.

"Ah, Mariano, you expect other guests?" Thus amiably the Earl of Hawcastle.

"A German gentleman, Milor', a Herr von Grollerhagen, who is to arrive with a friend for the *déjeuner*. I set this table for them." He glanced up expectantly at the sound of approaching steps, but the newcomers were not those he waited for.

Appeared instead the Honorable Almeric and Miss Granger-Simpson, the latter flushed from the ride, the former still exulting over his victory in a certain bout of repartee.

"Oh, I say, what a go!" he began, falling into one of the wicker chairs with an easy sprawling effect of his gaitered legs. "Motor-car breaks down on the way here. One of the Johnnies in it—a German, something of that sort—discharges the chauffeur and the other Johnny—one of Ethel's Yankee chaps,"—the girl winced and raised a protesting hand—"has got two silly little donkeys, like rabbits, you know, to pull the machine. Then as the little beasts can't make it, what does he do but put himself in the straps with 'em and go tuggin' up a hill. Ha, ha! I say. Well, as I was tellin' you——"

"Don't mumble your words!" The stately but fierce tones were those of Lady Creech who had approached during this spirited narrative. Her nephew had not mumbled his words and he now favored her with a glance of disapproval.

"As I was tellin' you," he continued, again amiable, "I went up to this Yankee chap——"

"Dreadful persons!" Lady Creech had caught the term.

"I mean to say, he was pullin' and tuggin' along in the straps, you see, don't you, and quick as a flash I says to the silly beggar, 'Why, there you are, three of you in a row, *aren't* you?' meanin' him and the two donkeys, of course, do you see?" Again he permitted himself a moment's hearty enjoyment of the sally. When he had recovered he resumed indignantly, "But this Yankee chap was the most *serious* juggins, I mean to say. He looked directly at me, and all he could answer was that he'd picked the best company in sight. 'Well, I picked the best company in sight,' says he, serious as could be, like that."

"Dreadful person!" Lady Creech had heard sufficient to justify this. Miss Granger-Simpson shuddered. That unheard retort had indeed been more atrocious than she could have suspected; so truly and atrociously American.

"No meanin' to it," grumbled the Honor-

able Almeric, though with a slight questioning glance at the faces of his hearers, still with a worried suspicion that the enigmatic speech had carried a subtle venom. "No meanin' to it," he insisted again though he had been uncontradicted. "I had him, you know, I rather think, *didn't* I?"

"And more excitement," put in the girl, praying that this impossible countryman of hers might be forgotten. "We saw such a lot of those funny policemen searching for an escaped convict, a bandit or something of that kind."

"A bandit in this civilized age?" Thus Lord Hawcastle.

"That is what they called him, but then they explained that he was an escaped convict—he'd been living in Salerno, but first he'd gotten away from Siberia where they send those Russian anarchists——"

"A Russian!" This exclamation from the Comtesse de Champigny, sudden, and quite

involuntary, at once put her in the questioning gaze of the others. She dissipated a momentary confusion by the prettiest of shrugs. "Such wicked men those escaped ones from Siberia—I fear we shall be murdered in our sleeps!"

"But they have him surrounded, he'll be retaken before nightfall; the carabiniere I talked to was sure of that." Miss Granger-Simpson sought to reassure the timid Frenchwoman.

"Quite so," confirmed the Honorable Almeric. "Carabiniere all over the shop with their silly guns——"

"Don't mumble your words," warned Lady Creech. Her nephew approached her, achieved a megaphone effect with his hands and shouted, "Lookin' for a bally bandit!"

Lady Creech permitted herself a scream. "Murdered in our beds," she proclaimed, grimly prophetic.

"They're bound to pot the beggar," her nephew assured her. "By Jove, I must look

out my own gun. Shouldn't mind havin' a go at a bit of bandit shootin' myself, what!"

Lady Creech with a backward glance of alarm into the fell recesses of the garden, began a dignified but direct progress to the hotel. "Americans, bandits—dreadful persons. Come Ethel, we'd best have luncheon indoors."

The Honorable Almeric arose, yawned in a public manner and followed the pair, muttering as he went. Try as he would he could not banish the monstrous suspicion that the American chap had really meant something after all by his silly words.

The Comtesse de Champigny turned quickly to the Earl of Hawcastle, a curious tremor of alarm in her beautiful eyes.

"You heard—from Siberia," she said rapidly. His lordship regarded her with a look of humorous reassurance as one would regard a child who conjures bogies to its own panic.

"Nonsense, Hélène! You're too imaginative. Certain parts of Siberia are densely pop-

ulated. Why should you suspect that because one has escaped——"

"But I tell you why; because for three nights I have dreamed of *him,* and now this happens. It makes me fear. Silly, yes, but I cannot help it."

The Earl of Hawcastle protectingly caught her trembling arm.

"Nonsense!" he repeated; "not a chance in a million."

CHAPTER V

A BOY AND GIRL NAMED SIMPSON

Almost an hour has passed, seeming indeed all of two hours to the perturbed Mariano hovering about his set table. He looks at his watch, then as if doubting its testimony, squints shrewdly at the overhead sun. He has heard the roadside gossip of an escaped Russian convict. He sincerely hopes that this circumstance is no factor in the delayed arrival of a certain Herr von Grollerhagen. And yet one never knows — certainly the German gentleman should have arrived ere this, should even now be perhaps exclaiming with delight at the skilled table service of the Hotel Regina Margherita as supervised by its experienced maître d'hôtel. Mariano savagely flicked a fallen

leaf from the shining damask of his table and with scowling intensity brought a fork and spoon into better alignment. Michele, lurking near, lynx-eyed for the technique of the master, shaped his lips ever and again to weird syllables of a gutteral quality endowed, as he firmly believed, with a magic to forward him in his chosen profession.

Voices sound from the hotel and Mariano brightens, but is again cast down at perceiving only the party of English ones. The others follow Lord Hawcastle who has burdened himself with the day's mail. They gather about him at one of the wicker tables screened from the sun. There is a fluttering moment in which he distributes letters. He then takes up the papers.

"The *Pink 'un* Governor." The Honorable Almeric interestedly strips his choice of its wrapper.

"The Church Register," demanded the voice of Lady Creech,—with the effect of intoning

it. She seated herself austerely over this permitted indulgence.

Horace Granger-Simpson in firm tones begged for the London *Times*. It was not a sheet he enjoyed, and only by the constant goading of his attention could he appear to be doing so, yet he now sat to it with rather extravagant manifestations of delight. The Comtesse de Champigny, already bestowed effectively by the table, scanned her Paris daily. The Earl of Hawcastle, honestly desiring the *Times,* politely pretended with a lesser sheet. Miss Granger-Simpson timidly halted Almeric who had seemed about to deprive the party of his presence.

"Going for a stroll, Almeric? Would you like me to go with you?"

Her fiancé frowned studiously. "Well, you know, I rather thought I'd have a quiet bit of readin'." He tenderly renewed his clasp of the *Pink 'un*. "That is if you don't mind."

"But of course not!" She turned back to the

table of silent readers. She had minded, a little. She had changed into a frock that she had fondly hoped might engage the notice even of a veritable St. Aubyn,—and the Honorable Almeric had remained unmoved before its shimmering play of pinks and lavender! She sighed as she joined the group, blankly eyeing a London journal not in use.

Presently, one by one, the readers began to raise annoyed glances from their papers, the cause being a distant but discordant commotion in the village street outside. A shouting and a tumult there were such as even the insensitive ears of Lady Creech could not ignore. The papers were impatiently readjusted and the annoyed glances from one to another of the group became questioning.

"What disgracefully noisy people these Italians are!" observed the Earl of Hawcastle. "The slightest excuse serves them for an uproar."

"They have so much to learn from the Eng-

lish!" Brother Horace sighed as if abandoning all hope that they ever really would learn it, for the noise increased momentarily. The shouting could now be distinguished as cheers with a faint accompaniment of mandolins and guitars. It came ever nearer. There could hardly longer be a pretense of reading, for just beyond the wall of the garden at least a hundred lusty throats of this notably vocal race were being strained to their utmost. The dominant strain was one of sheer joy, and, moreover, it was now possible to distinguish certain phrases of the vivacious libretto. At least the ears of Miss Granger-Simpson already quickened by a premonition of evil—she had lively memories of a similar shouting back on the roadside—now caught random words that froze her with dismay.

"Yanka Dooda! Yanka Dooda!" shrilled a tenor of no mean attainments, and this was followed by a baritone of "Bravo Americano!"

She stared in dull dismay at the newspaper

before her, every alert nerve tingling its message of alarm to her quickened heart. Instantly she had known the worst. The disabled automobile, its boorish owner and even that impossible countryman of hers had made their way to the very portals of the Hotel Regina Margherita. But surely they would pass on with their wretched buffoonery! Without knowing it she prayed that they would pass on, prayed with still lips but as ingenuously as a young nun. Her expressed thought would have been, "Surely there is a just God ruling over all—He can't let them come *here!*"

Mariano at this point hastened from the hotel to a post by his jealously guarded table. It was plain that he labored under a seizure of conflicting emotions. He had been both horrified and amused; one could guess that, of one sort or another, there were tears in his eyes.

The Earl of Hawcastle had borne, he considered, all that any English gentleman should bear of annoyance in a foreign land.

"I say, Mariano, how long is this disgusting uproar to continue?"

Mariano raised both hands, palms outward, held them thus for an eloquent moment, then dropped them despairingly, quite as if he were through with those particular hands for all time.

"How can I tell, milor'? It is awful funny thing—" Mariano chose his words with more discrimination than many who are not above this phrase: He really meant that it was awful and that it was funny— He looked at one of the discarded hands and seemed to decide that it might be used once more. He flung it to one side, again with spreading palm, and inclined his head toward it at the obtuse angle his stout neck permitted. The hand was Confession; the tilted head paid a sorrowing attention to it. "Si, it is droll the most terrible. Those ones that shout and make a disgusting uproar will not go off while they think there is once more a chance to look at the North

American who pull the automobile with the donkeys."

"Hallo, though!" His lordship brightened. "It must be the pair you saw on the road this morning. They've come to our hotel. One of your American chaps, you said?"

If Miss Granger-Simpson heard this remark —and it was pointedly addressed to her—she gave no sign. Her mind had frozen on the horror of this grotesque compatriot of hers. She saw again his straining shoulders, bent but towering above the beasts at his side. Her brother seemed to divine her plight.

"Not *our* Americans," he flashed; "one could hardly say that, *could* one?" There was the daring of a delicate rebuke in his tones as he again lowered his eyes to the London *Times*. He was glad indeed it chanced to be the *Times*.

Mariano at a sign from Michele now hastened to the hotel entrance. Together they stood there at attention. From between them issued a person in the genteel garb of a menial,

carrying before him a tray on which reposed a silver dish of caviar and a bottle of vodka. These delicacies he placed on the set table, under Mariano's frantic glare. Mariano was torn between the wish to place them properly (which he conceived that the valet had not at all done) and the stronger impulse to stay where he was. The tension induced by this battle of the spirit was not lost upon the now watchful Earl of Hawcastle.

"Upon my soul, who's all this?" he demanded.

Mariano, once more professionally congealed, spoke in an awed undertone and without turning his head.

"It is a German gentleman, Milor'—a"—he swallowed nervously—"a Herr von Grollerhagen." Michele framed his now practised lips to the same mystic vocables, though he had begun to suspect that they did not constitute a charm against evil.

His lordship deigned to be amused. "Ger-

man, eh? Man that owned the automobile, to be sure." He briefly again reviewed the elaborate setting of the table, the attitudes of strained attention exhibited by the three servitors. He drew his own pithy and simple conclusion: "Probably made a huge fortune in sausages." Even his lordship would not be above the winged quip at moments so propitious as this. Nor did he wholly lose his interest in the spectacle when Mariano and Michele bowed low before the person who now emerged briskly from the hotel—the man, in short, whom we last observed surrendering himself to the green earth of Italy that he might laugh the better.

"This way, Herr von Grollerhagen. The *déjeuner* shall be served instantly." Mariano has regained his ease of manner, his tension relaxing. Even Michele who has all the morning felt the strain of some hovering mystery now draws an easy breath as he inserts a chair under the trustfully descending form of their

guest. After all, here is but a large and amiable looking gentleman who, even to Michele's untrained eye, will have the habit of lavishing abundant largesse upon those who serve him acceptably.

"What a dreadful person!" Lady Creech advances this after a brief upward glance from the columns of the *Church Register*.

"See to my American friend yonder," came the voice of the newcomer addressing Mariano. The Earl of Hawcastle thereupon favored his sister-in-law with a reminding glance.

"Quite right, but take care—he speaks English."

Lady Creech was not for caution or concealment of her views.

"Many thoroughly objectionable people do," she responded in firm tones.

Both of her speeches had been of a resonance to be envied by more than one platform orator. The objectionable person who spoke English permitted himself the slightest turn of his head

and a brief shifting of his glance from the caviar now being served to him by Mariano. It was as if he had detected a draft from an open window that might presently have to be closed. He continued to speak an English that was curiously faultless in its polish and that yet betrayed itself as foreign to him—though we may note its being English little enough after the German manner as that is commonly encountered. "My American friend, it seems, desired his own national dish," he affably confided to Mariano.

"Ah, yes, Herr von Grollerhagen." The atrocious tale had been borne to Mariano. "He greatly criticize that national dish as it have been prepared for him in the hotel at Napoli. He say the Italians know not the true American method. He himself go to the kitchen to make sure. But he have confuse us—he have confuse everyone with that national dish of his. He will have the hams fried and the eggs cooked but on one of two sides, as if an

egg shall have sides like another object more square—yet that is how he say it. Ha! He have done it. He come, Herr von Grollerhagen."

Michele issued from the hotel, bearing to the table a tray from which he removed a dish. Covered though it was, no one in that garden could have suspected it to contain anything but ham and eggs. Lady Creech put to its heaven-intended use a nose that was superbly English. Miss Granger-Simpson shuddered as she realized that she was unable to glance away from the portal that had already yielded Michele and his aromatic treasure. She wished to look away; she wished to flee. She remained; she stared with horror-fixed eyes. This perverse self-torture of hers became unutterably poignant as there framed itself in the doorway the radiant figure of the young man who had behaved that morning as no one ought to and as only a countryman of her own would be likely to.

With shrewd, humorous, kindly eyes he surveyed the glaring group as he bestowed upon an anxious menial the towel with which he had wiped his hands.

"I didn't know there were folks here," he remarked in easy tones. "I reckon you'll have to excuse me." Undoubtedly it wore the look of an apology. The group of indignant observers might have taken it as addressed to themselves, or they might not. The speaker seemed to trouble himself no further in the matter but proceeded swiftly to the table. The eyes of Miss Granger-Simpson followed him with hypnotic submission. There was agony in their profound depths. And brother Horace, not properly alarmed until this moment, now knew the worst, knew all the prefatory suffering of his sensitive sister. A deep glow suffused his earnest young face, but his eyes remained firm upon strange unrelated words that danced in wild indecorum across the page of the dignified journal he now held well aloft.

As if those kindly English souls had divined the mortification of these young people there seemed now about the reading table a tactful resolve to ignore the presence of this too patently American intruder, though the latter promised with his every word to render this feat increasingly difficult.

"You are a true patriot, my friend. You will permit no profane liberties with your national dish. I trust you will achieve as distinguished success with that wicked motor of mine." Thus the alleged German as he raised a tiny glass of vodka to his lips.

The American chuckled as if at his own assured competence. "Lord bless your soul! I've put a self-binder together after a pony-engine had butted it half way through a brick depot."

"You have studied mechanics at your university?"

"University? Me? Bless your heart, no! I studied mechanics on the old man's farm."

His companion nodded with a sort of grave comprehension, regarding for a moment then the ham and eggs. "Let me persuade you to accept a bit of one of my own national dishes—caviar."

"Caviar? I've heard of that. I thought it was Russian." He regarded the proffered delicacy with interest, thereby missing a curious brief tremor in the eyes of Mariano.

"It is also German?—will you not?" There was a brief flutter, too, in the heavy-lidded eyes of the speaker, as Mariano placed a spoonful of caviar on a silver dish by the American's plate. He glanced at it adventurously.

"I expect I'd never get to the legislature again if the boys back home heard about it. Still, I reckon I'm far enough away from home to take a *few* risks." He loaded a fork with the prized roe and seemed to engulf it in a friendly smile. Slowly the smile faded. His face became thoughtful, then grave. Ab-

sently he returned the fork to the plate and eyed his companion. His mouth was firmly closed, his jaws moving slightly, almost timidly. His look was puzzled, plaintive, eloquent.

"But I fear you do not like it." The German seemed sincerely concerned. "Here, my friend; a swallow of vodka will take away the taste." Quickly he poured and proffered a tiny glass of the spirit. The American reached blindly for this and eagerly drained the glass. This he replaced quietly enough on the table, but his eyelids fluttered and he bent upon his hospitable neighbor a look of dumb suffering. Then he managed a faint, distrustful smile.

"I never had any business to leave home," he declared in the feeble tones of a convalescent.

"I am so sorry, my friend, truly—" He paused as the American surprisingly engulfed another forkful of the caviar—"But I thought you did not like the caviar!"

"It's to take away the taste of the vodka,"

returned the American with simple pathos.

It is not to be supposed that this too-American behavior had gone unregarded by those at the adjacent table. Miss Granger-Simpson had mercifully been able to detach her gaze from the creature, and brother Horace had buried his face deeper in the profundities of his paper, but each was acutely aware of the scene. Lady Creech had frankly let her periodical rest in her lap and without any abating or concealment was fixing the noxious intruder with the glare of a basilisk. Even the less impressionable lord Hawcastle was moved now to remark, "Without disrespect to you, my dear chap, what terrific bounders the most of your countrymen are!"

"Do you wonder that Sis and I have emancipated ourselves from that sort of thing?" Horace murmured this from behind his rampart. He was feeling that he had caught the only correct note under these distressing circumstances. That was the sort of thing they

had once known but they had left it far, far behind. They were safe from it now. His sister stirred slightly in her trance of mortification. The Comtesse de Champigny rippled mirthfully at each demonstration of the droll American. The latter was continuing to exercise his superb talent for being offensive to auditors he wotted not of.

"Talking of things to drink," he was saying, "you never worked on a farm in your own country, did you, Doc?"

Again a shadow flitted across the eyes of Mariano as he listened to this form of address, but nothing in the German's mien betokened that he was unaccustomed to it.

"That has been denied me," he said.

"I expect so, but you've missed something. Harvest time and the women-folks coming from the farmhouse out over the hot fields with a two-gallon jug of ice-cold buttermilk!" He desisted from his ham-and-eggs for a low whistle of relish.

"You still enjoy those delights?"

"Not since I moved up to our county-seat. Things don't taste the same in a city."

"You do not like your city?"

"*Like* it?" The tone was not that of a braggart. It was too simply, almost pathetically, earnest. "Well, sir, for public buildings and architecture I wouldn't trade our new State insane asylum for the best-ruined ruin you've got over here—not for hygiene and real comfort," he added, as if to soften this blow.

"And your people?"

"The best on earth!"

"But you have no leisure class."

The other regarded him with whimsical tolerance. "No leisure class? Say, Doc, you ought to have a look at our colored population."

"I mean no aristocracy," persisted the German. One quick to suspect base motives might have thought him prankishly bent on

evoking gross declarations from the American for the specific annoyance of those whom he perceived to be already vexed listeners. "I mean," he explained, "no great old families such as we have that go back and back to the Middle Ages." His companion met the inquiry genially.

"Well, I expect if they go back that far they might just as well sit down and stay there. No, sir, that's one thing about my country—the poor don't have to pay taxes for a lot of useless kings and earls and first grooms of the bed-chamber and second ladies-in-waiting and I don't know what all! If anybody wants our money for nothing he has to show energy enough to steal it." He beamed upon his questioner. "Doc, I wonder a man like you doesn't emigrate."

"Bravo! Bravo!" cried the German and seemed on the verge of another of those fits of helpless laughter that had overcome him on the roadside—and this even though he must

have noticed increasing consternation among the listening group. Horace was rapidly explaining to the Earl of Hawcastle that the fellow was distinctly of the lower classes and would be cut by him, Horace, as summarily "in the States" as here. And Lady Creech could no longer contain herself. One might ignore the better intended of American gaucheries, but this last was sheer ruffianism.

"Hawcastle," she demanded truculently, "have you a notion how long these persons mean to intrude upon our privacy? I had a distinct impression that the manager of the hotel had reserved this terrace for our own party." She frowned darkly upon Mariano who chose not to observe it. Miss Granger-Simpson remained tragic—cataleptic.

"It is somewhat vexing not to be allowed to read one's paper in peace," conceded his lordship. And Horace, still artfully concealing a countenance that he knew would be instantly recognized as American by any other of that

people, echoed from behind his *Times,* "Quite beastly annoying!"

"Since you so admire your country, my friend, I wonder you make this long journey, instead of to spend your holiday at home."

"Holiday! Why, Doc, you won't believe it, but I've never even had time to go see Niagara Falls!"

"Dreadful person!" The speaker need not be named. Her tones carried well. The German grinned, but almost instantly became, or seemed to become, deeply concerned.

"I fear we have disturbed those good people."

The American glanced aside with honest wonder. "Do you think they're—hinting at us?"

"I really suspect it."

"Well, I guess there ain't any bones broken." He seemed disposed to regard the matter lightly. The German remarked, "Finito!" to Mariano, disposed his napkin on the table and lighted a cigarette. The American pushed his

chair from the table, folded his napkin with a practised air and lighted a cigar. The throaty murmur is from the Comtesse de Champigny: "Mon Dieu! But what is it he does with his serviette?" Brother Horace now writhes in his chair. "I can't stand this," he mutters. His sister, stony as ever in her humiliation, is nevertheless valiantly striving again to reconstruct that delightful old Mr. Pike who must soon arrive. If only he prove to be an American of another sort to wipe out the memory of this casual one!

"No, sir," proceeds the American voice relentlessly, "you wouldn't catch me putting in any time around these old kingdoms if I didn't have to."

"Ah, you come here for a duty then?" Still the German regards the attentive group with a certain relish not too well veiled.

"Well, I shouldn't be surprised if that was the name of it—yes sir, all the way from old Indiana!" A low cry of fear was all but

stifled in the throat of Miss Granger-Simpson. But at once she smiled at her fears. *That* simply couldn't be true. Yet they were all staring tensely now at the American. He was speaking again. They had both risen from the table.

"I expect probably, Doc, I won't be able to eat with you this evening. You see," he paused, queerly embarrassed, "you see I've come a long way to look after her and she probably—that is, *they'll* probably want me to have supper with *them.*" He had spoken the last rather breathlessly, though not rapidly, and with a growing smile that was like a confession.

"Do not trouble for me, my friend. Seek your people. I finish my cigarette."

"I'd better inquire for them; they're at this hotel."

"I must get away." This is the voice of Horace Granger-Simpson, hoarse with apprehension. The *Times* has served him excel-

lently but is now thrown aside. He stands, he moves furtively a few steps, then briskly quickens his pace toward a remote corner of the garden. He has neared a sheltering hedge when he hears a dreadful voice.

"Hey, there! Can you——"

Doggedly brother Horace proceeds, deaf to this assault. It is renewed.

"Excuse me, son, aren't you an American? Waiter!"—for Horace fled frankly now—"tell that gentleman I'm speaking to *him.*"

Mariano placed himself in the line of flight. "Monsieur, that gentleman wish to speak with you." Horace turned desperately, yet admirably with the air of one who has been affronted in a public place.

"What gentleman?"

Mariano, with his hands, shoulders and head, gracefully indicated the American, what time the latter genially hailed once more.

"I thought from your looks you must be an American."

Horace ably achieved an expression of the profoundest incredulity.

"Are you speaking to *me?*"

"Well, I shouldn't be surprised," returned the impossible person with flawless good-humor. "Aren't you an American?"

Horace made the concession with a dignity that would austerely preserve itself no matter what foul blows were struck it. "I happen to have been born in the States."

The American flashed him a glance of sudden wonder. "Well, that was luck, wasn't it!"

Horace turned royally upon his heel. "Will you kindly excuse me?"

"Hold on a minute!" For Horace was again in action. "I'm looking for some Americans here, and perhaps you know them—a boy and girl named Simpson."

This time a low cry of fear was not stifled in the throat of Miss Granger-Simpson. Horace retained a sort of shuddering calm.

"Do you by any chance mean Granger-Simpson?"

"No, sir; just plain Simpson. Granger's their middle name. That's for old Jed Granger, grandfather on their mother's side—old 'Sour Apple' Granger they used to call him, on account of his——"

The gesture of disrelish made by Horace was so emphatic that it instantly dammed this flow of reminiscence.

"All right, son, I won't bore you, but I want to see this boy and girl, though it's the girl I'm really looking for."

The tone of Horace was now both alarmed and truculent. "Will you be good enough to state any possible reason why Miss Granger-Simpson should see you?"

"Reason?" The American spoke in profound surprise and yet mildly. "Why, yes—I'm her guardian."

The hand of Miss Granger-Simpson here went to her forehead in sign of dizziness, ap-

parently. The Comtesse de Champigny immediately put a protecting arm about her. Brother Horace, for the moment, lost his manner.

"What!" he gasped.

"Yes, sir; Daniel Voorhees Pike, attorney-at-law, Kokomo, Indiana."

Horace fell back in honest horror. His sister sustained the shock with a better show of stoicism. Had she not in her foresight been nerving herself to it? She stared rigidly at the man who had thus announced himself. The Earl of Hawcastle, intensely quickened yet cool, made an imperative gesture to Lady Creech. The latter swept majestically up to Miss Granger-Simpson, imprinted on her forehead a kiss of lofty pity, and swept majestically into the hotel. The Comtesse de Champigny in turn saluted the girl compassionately on a cheek and followed Lady Creech. Her shrug as she went conveyed much.

There had been a sickening pause after the

American's last speech. Brother Horace now broke it, his voice hoarse with shame. "I'll ask her if she will consent to an interview."

The other was frankly astounded. "Consent to an interview? I want to *talk* to her. Don't you understand? I'm her guardian and I want to talk to her. That's what I'm here for." He was laboring patiently with this seemingly dense American. The succeeding gesture of Horace was the final flowering of desperation. As he rushed at last to some garden refuge he was heard to mutter, "I shall never hold up my head again!"

The American stared after him in pained wonder, then turned to his German friend who, seemingly inattentive, had lounged by the balustrade.

"When you have finished your affairs, my friend, remember my poor car yonder; you have promised——"

The other flashed him a melancholy smile. "All right, Doc. I'm kind of confused just

now, but I reckon I can still put a plug back in a gear-box."

At the table his lordship the Earl of Hawcastle lingered for a final cheering word to the girl. "This shall make no difference to *us,* my child. Speak to him at once." Fondly he patted her shoulder and withdrew as a man above petty notions of what one's solicitor should be. The girl stood forward, rigid, pale. There before her, waving his hand to the departing German, was the actual truth about that dear old Mr. Pike she had so tenderly called into being. A moment she stood in appalled silence—then haughtily, yet with her eyes cast down, with the air, indeed, of confessing a truth humiliating beyond measure, she addressed the back of this stranger.

"I am Miss Granger-Simpson."

CHAPTER VI

THE PRICE OF THE HONORABLE ALMERIC

Daniel Voorhees Pike turned quickly to regard the substance of what had long been his most secret and familiar vision. He stared in silence a moment at the girl who drooped before him, both tenderness and a great pride in his eyes. Honest wonder was in his voice as he addressed her.

"Why, I knew your father from the time I was a little boy till he died, and I looked up to him more than I ever looked up to anybody in my life, but—well, as much as I looked up to him I never thought he'd have a girl like you!"

The girl turned half away from him as if to avoid the pain of this. With a faulty instinct he took a short step toward her. With the

soft wonder still in his voice he added, "He'd have been mighty proud to see you as you are now."

The girl frankly recoiled, yet controlled her agitation.

"Perhaps it will be as well if we avoid personal allusions." Her tone was icy, distant, quelling.

"But I don't see how that's possible." There was mild protest in this. The girl shivered, then with a desperate effort to relieve a tension that was becoming intolerable she looked about her, stepped to a chair which supported but hardly won her—she sat rigidly forward—and said, "Will you sit down, please?" She must break that fixity of his regard. The young man seemed to transport himself from an immense distance to this spot. He drew a long breath, gazed with shocked amazement at the cigar he still held, discarded this quickly and seating himself near the girl stared at her again with tenderly rejoicing eyes.

"As you know," she began tremulously, "I—I—" Her eyes had been cast down, now she raised them to him with a sudden worried impatience. "Oh, are you *really* my guardian?"

Pike smiled. "Well, I've got the papers in my grip. Of course I expect——"

"Oh, I know you must be. It would *have* to be true—it's only that we didn't fancy, we didn't expect——"

"I expect you thought I'd be considerably older."

"Not only *that*——"

He interrupted her gently. "I expect you thought I'd neglected you a good deal." He was remorseful now. She felt this, monstrous though it seemed to her. "And it did look like it, never coming to see you. I don't wonder at all that you thought I was neglecting you. But I really couldn't seem to manage the time to get away. You see, being trustee of your share of the estate and with my own law-prac-

tice I've been kept pretty busy back there. But when I got your letter two weeks ago I says to myself, 'Here, D. V. Pike, you old shell-back, you've just got to take the time. John Simpson trusted you with his property and he did more: he trusted you to look out for *her,* and now she's come to a kind of a jumping-off place in her life—she's thinking of getting married, so you just pack your grip and hike out over there and stand *by* her!"

The girl had become frigid again under this outburst of almost fatherly affection. She threw her head back again to quell him. "I quite fail to understand your point of view. Perhaps I can best make my own view clear to you by saying at once that I am no longer *thinking* of getting married."

Pike evinced a pleased astonishment at this, and relaxed in his own chair. "Well, for the Lord's sake!" The girl continued with deadly succinctness.

"I mean I have decided upon it. The ceremony will take place within a fortnight."

"Well, now, I declare!" He sat forward again in his chair, regarding her with sympathetic concern.

"We shall dispense with all delays." She would leave no excuse for him to misunderstand.

He replied slowly, a little sadly, perhaps, "Well, I don't know as I could rightly say anything against that. He must be a mighty nice fellow, and you must think a heap of him. Of course, that's the way it should be." It might have been thought that he here suppressed a sigh, but he smiled again and leaned toward her in his friendly way. "And you're happy, are you?"

Miss Ethel Simpson's attitude had relaxed slightly from the perpendicular. Now it was instantly restored and she uttered one word with the coldest emphasis.

"Distinctly."

Pike's expression became slightly puzzled. It was perhaps more the expression of an attorney-at-law than of a solicitous guardian. He passed a long, lean, freckled hand over his noticeable chin and studied her keenly. Then his glance went to the spot of his recent encounter with a certain visibly offended young American. He started as if shocked by a sudden fear.

"Say—it isn't that young fellow I was talking to yonder? He *said* he was an American."

The girl eyed him in quick indignation. "*That* was my brother!"

The other spoke with obvious relief and not a little embarrassment.

"Well, for the Lord's sake! But naturally I wouldn't remember him. He couldn't have been more than twelve years old the last time I saw him. Of course I'd have known *you*."

"You haven't seen me, either, since I was a child." The retort was acid of quality.

"Oh, I'd have known you from your picture, though of course you've improved a lot since that was taken."

She saw again the look of enthusiastic appraisal which had already overwhelmed her with embarrassment.

"*You*—have a photograph of me?"

"The last time I saw your father alive he gave me one."

She frowned at this. "*Gave* it to you?"

"Gave it to me to—to look at, to keep. And I've kept it—looked at it a good deal of course at odd moments—naturally."

In some obscure way she found herself in discomfort at this artless avowal.

"I think we may dismiss the subject," she announced very crisply.

Pike again seemed to recall himself from an immense distance.

"Well, if you'd like to introduce me to your—" He laughed rather feebly, hesitating—"to your—"

"To my brother?"

"No, not to him. I mean to your—to the young man."

"To Mr. St. Aubyn? I think that quite unnecessary." This was coolly final, so that she was shocked anew at his reply, though he prefaced this with an apologetic laugh.

"I'm afraid I can't see it just that way. I'll *have* to have a couple of talks with him—sort of look him over, so to speak. But I won't stay around here spoiling your fun any longer than I can help. Only just for that and to get a letter I'm expecting here from England. Don't be afraid. Everything will be all right."

It was indeed being as bad as she had feared. Her lip began to tremble. "I don't see that you need have come at all. Why did we ever send for you? We could have been spared this mortification."

The other was rudely shocked in his turn. "You mean *I* mortify you. Why, I—I can't see how."

"Oh, dear, I know you can't—but in a hundred ways I couldn't make you understand. My friends are different from any people you could know—and you could have written your consent."

"Not without seeing the young man first —or knowing all about him." The speaker was mild but insistent.

The girl continued, unheeding. "And you could have arranged the settlement in the same way—it could have been done by mail."

Pike smiled rather grimly. "You seem to have settled it pretty well without me, anyway."

"You don't understand. An alliance of this sort always entails a certain settlement." She was almost kindly now in her impatience. Yet she had apparently not enlightened him.

"An alliance, eh? And that's what they call getting married over here? And a settlement? Well, I know of course that when folks get

married they generally settle down, more or less."

The girl was still rather kindly in her effort to illumine this darkness. "Please listen. If you were at all a man of the world I shouldn't have to explain that in marrying into a noble family I bring my *dot*—my dowry——"

The young attorney from Kokomo had translated the tiny French word most unhappily. "Your—your *dough?* Money, you mean?"

She repressed a shudder. "If you choose to put it that way."

"Oh, I see." He smiled in relief once more at the ease of this. "You mean you want to put aside something of your own to buy a lot and fix up a place to start housekeeping——"

"No, *no!*" Again the lip trembled with chagrin almost tearful. "I mean a settlement upon Mr. St. Aubyn directly."

"You mean you want to give it to him?"

"If that's the only way to make you under-

stand—*yes!*" This, beyond question, was snappish. The word is not too strong.

"Well, how much do you want to give him?" The inquiry was put almost with amusement.

"A hundred and fifty thousand pounds." She uttered the words lightly, jauntily, with none of that awe for money in the mass which Americans are said to feel.

Pike flinched, then stared incredulously. "Seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars?"

"*Precisely* that!"

She had aroused him, she saw. Until now he had been treating her too much like a fanciful child. He answered in profound amazement.

"Well, he *has* made you care for him. I guess he must be the Prince of the World, my dear. He must be a great man! I expect you were right about me not meeting him. I surely wouldn't show up very well beside a man that's big enough for you to think that much of. I didn't dream he was as big as that—a cabinet minister or something." He paused

to smile in calculation. "Why, I'd have to squeeze every bit of property your father left."

"Is it your property?" Again she was distinctly snappish.

"No; I've taken pretty good care of it for you, though."

Impulsively the girl half arose from her chair, extending a hand toward him. "Forgive me for saying that!"

He brushed her contrition aside with a muttered "Pshaw!" The girl continued rapidly.

"It was unworthy of me, unworthy of the higher and nobler things that this new life will call me to live up to—that I *shall* live up to! The money means nothing to me—I'm not thinking of that."

Again he keenly studied the ardent young face, debating the form of a new approach to this surprising matter.

"Have you talked with Mr. St. Aubyn about this—this settlement, this present you want to make him."

She nobly ignored the American crudeness of this, to answer clearly.

"No, of course, not with *him*."

Pike was now cheerfully enlivened. "Well —I *thought* not. But you'll see—he wouldn't take it if I'd let you give it to him. A fine big man like that wants to make his own way, of course. Mighty few men like to have fun poked at them about living on their wives' money."

"Oh, I can't make you understand—" She was despairing again, but rallied the few words she felt were needed. "A settlement is not a gift!"

Again he maddened her by that air of humoring a child.

"By the way, how did you happen to decide that exactly a hundred and fifty thousand pounds was what you wanted to give him? Seems to me if you had decided on that sum, yourself, you'd have said it in dollars. Who did decide it?"

"It was Mr. St. Aubyn's father who fixed the amount."

"His father? What's his father got to do with it?"

"He is the Earl of Hawcastle, the head of the ancient house."

"And he asks you for your property—asks you in so many words?"

His honest incredulity enraged the girl. Openly she glared at him.

"As a *settlement!*"

"And your young man knows it?" demanded the aghast Mr. Pike.

"I tell you I have not discussed the matter with Mr. St. Aubyn."

Once more the attorney brightened with a genial comprehension.

"I should say not! Well, sir, do you know what's the first thing this Mr. St. Aubyn will do when he finds out his father has made such a proposition to you? Why, he'll take the old man out in the back lot and give him a thrash-

ing he won't forget to the day of his death. I tell you, he'll simply——"

But his heated description of this act of retributive justice was broken off by a shot sounding from below the cliff, followed by a roll of drums and the call of a bugle. They both turned to regard Mariano and Michele who ran from the hotel to peer over the balustrade. Mariano turned at a word from the girl.

"That bandit of Russia, mademoiselle! Those soldiers think he hide in a grotto under the cliff."

As the pair still pondered this announcement the scene was enlivened by the dashing entrance of the Honorable Almeric. Like a true descendant of the fighting men of old he flourished a shot-gun as he ran to join the absorbed Mariano and Michele.

"Oh, I say, fair sport, by Jove. Fair sport! Think I'll have a chance to pot the beggar, Mariano?"

Mariano appeared to regret that the shoot-

ing privileges of an otherwise admirable hotel were curtailed by the State. "I fear not, signore. There are two companies of carabiniere who will doubtless make—make the pot of him."

It should be said that Miss Simpson had looked steadily away from her illustrious fiancé after one hasty glance. It is possible that at this moment his speech was causing her a certain discomfort she would queerly not have cared to define to herself. Mr. Pike, of Kokomo, on the other hand, had stared frankly at the young Englishman and glad rejoicing welled in his eyes. He turned to the girl. His little chuckling laugh had already filled her with consternation.

"I saw *him* back on the road this morning —What's he *meant* for?"

Miss Simpson called to her fiancé with what might have been thought a trace of anger in one less earnestly striving for the nobler things of life.

"Almeric!"

He turned reluctantly and approached them.

"Hallo!" The greeting was vivacious. The Honorable Almeric was still flushed with the joys of the chase.

"I wish," said Miss Simpson with cold dignity, "to present my guardian." She turned superbly to Pike. *"This* is Mr. St. Aubyn."

Mr. Pike froze to a statue of staring unbelief, a statue with its lower jaw dropped. The blunt truth should be told: he was behaving uncouthly. The Honorable Almeric presented a gratifying contrast of an affable and finished man of the world.

"Hallo, though. Why, it's the donkey-man, isn't it? How very odd! But he'll have to see the Governor and our solicitor about the settlement and that sort of thing. I've important business on here. The police are chasing a bally convict chap under the cliff yonder, so you'll have to excuse me—I must be toddlin'. Nothing like a bit of convict shootin' to break

the monotony, what!" He quickly rejoined the waiters at the terrace wall.

Pike very slowly turned upon the girl a face of horror. She did not meet his look, her eyes being stubbornly fixed upon a remote hillside. There came again the cheerful shout of the Honorable Almeric.

"I say, wait for me, you fellows—don't hurt him till I get there!"

Miss Simpson may have winced, but her far-fixed gaze did not waver. Not at least for the first moment. Then slowly she felt herself impelled to turn. Patently against her own will she looked upon that rigid mask of dismay, her breath quickening, her cheeks flaming.

Pike seemed to shake off the obsession. His eyes blazed upon the girl and one arm raised to point a deadly finger toward the latest of the St. Aubyns. He began with a slow intensity.

"Seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars for—" He had broken down under the stu-

pendous incredibility of it. Again he shook the thing off and brightened. "Say—how much do they charge over here for a *real* man?"

Miss Simpson covered her flaming cheeks with her hands.

"Oh, you are awful—awful!" she piteously muttered, and fled. She left the man incredulous, dumbfounded, frozen anew with horror.

CHAPTER VII

MR. PIKE SINGS AT HIS WORK

Two hours later, in the cool green seclusion of the hotel's rear garden, Daniel Voorhees Pike toiled hotly at a disabled motor-car. The floor-boards of the car had been removed, its apron lifted. Mr. Pike had donned the long blouse of the late chauffeur which made a little for the suggestion, as he bent above an open tool bag, of a surgeon about to operate. Now he selects an instrument and probes the more intimate mysteries of his patient. He seems to be wholly absorbed in this delicate feat for his whistle is obviously no more than casual, absent-minded diversion. He even sings softly from time to time parts of the ballad that seems to wander at random

through his memory—"The Blue and the Gray" we gather it to be.

He appears, as we have said, to be entirely devoted to his task. He frowns whole-heartedly as he probes or tugs with his wrench at a stubborn bolt. He frowns as he whistles, even as he words the tender refrain, "One lies down in Appomattox." So intense is his concentration we know he would be quite unable to name his ballad were he suddenly asked to do so. Not for him the distant green slopes of vineyard and olive orchard leading up the mountain-side to one of those ruins he has so lately disparaged. Nor for him the ancient stone wall at his back, with its crest of vines in autumn tints hanging from it in profusion. Nor for him the white-columned pergola with its awning of yellow-fruited lemon branches beside which the wounded car has been brought to rest. He is, indeed, so entirely the absorbed mechanician that one with difficulty believes he has just survived the most prodigious

shock of his career, though perhaps he purposely seeks distraction in this labor while certain events assume their rightful perspective in his disturbed mind. The near-by wing of the hotel has closed its eyes to him, the awnings of its windows being lowered as if the sight of this weird American must be resolutely shut out.

The probing, tapping, wrenching work proceeded, always with its absent low accompaniment, now the meditative whistle, now a softly sung line or two of the affecting ballad. So intensely applied was the toiler to his task, that the brusque entrance of brother Horace went unnoted. At least Mr. Pike seemed not to note it. The music continued, the time being now cleverly marked by the impact of a hammer upon metal; the eyes of the worker did not waver from his task.

Brother Horace had invaded the place by means of the stout gate set in the vine-ruffled wall. He pushed it open, he pushed it shut

behind him, with rude, almost explosive movements. He advanced swiftly to the unseeing worker and glowered upon him. The worker remained oblivious to this menace, though perhaps "The Blue and the Gray" progressed with a slight increase in vivacity. Although heated to the point of rosiest flesh tints, Horace controlled himself to speak with an excellent effect of politeness. Something unruffled in the demeanor of the man working there had daunted him to a quick suspicion that he was not going to prevail in this matter by mere browbeating.

"Mr. Pike!" Indeed he spoke almost urbanely.

Mr. Pike hammered at a bolt-head with a monkey-wrench and continued his melodic self-communion; "—One wore clothes of gray—" he softly sang.

"Mr. Pike! Mr. Pike, I wish a word with you."

The other now looked up mildly, abruptly

discontinued the music to remark "Hu-um!" in a peculiarly dry tone and moved to the other side of the engine where he rubbed the handle of the monkey-wrench across his chin as if puzzled, frowning with deep attention into the machine's interior. At this Horace glowered again. It was not the sort of impertinence he had expected, even from an American. He spoke again, sharply now.

"Mr. Pike, I wish to tell you that the surprise of this morning so upset me that I went for a long walk. I have just returned."

However inconclusive this sounded, Horace had plainly meant it to convey matter for deep thought.

"One lies down at Appomattox—" sang Mr. Pike in a voice never meant for this difficult art. His lips shaped themselves to whistle the remainder of the verse. Horace dashed in upon this silent second.

"I wish to tell you that I have been even

more upset by what I have just learned from my sister."

Mr. Pike forebore to whistle. "Now, that's too bad," he condoled, yet without any deep conviction of sympathy. His mind seemed still to be upon his task. His face brightened as he discovered a loose valve fitting and he tightened this with a look of triumph.

"It *is* too bad—absurdly—monstrously bad." Horace was now fretting openly. "She tells me that after she had recovered from the shock of your first meeting her she did you the honor to present you to the family with which we are forming an alliance—to the Earl of Hawcastle, her fiancé's father——"

The other had continued his work with cheerful absent-mindedness, but now he admitted, "She did, she did," and whistled softly again.

"To her fiancé's aunt, Lady Creech——"

"Yes, sir, to the whole possetucky of them." Abruptly the speaker burst into song attack-

ing this time another number in his repertoire. "'She was my hanky-panky-danky from the town of Kalamazack—' Yes, sir, to that French lady, too." Followed quickly a line from the new song, after a quick, keen glance at Horace. "'She ran away with a circus clown, she never did come back—'" Again he hammered the bolt-head.

"And she introduced you to her fiancé—to Mr. St. Aubyn himself." Horace conveyed that this would be the cap-stone in that arch of social favors, and Mr. Pike himself seemed to regard it as noteworthy. He chuckled delightedly.

"Yes, *sir!* Jolly sort, *isn't* he? We talked a bit about big-game shooting in Indiana. He wants to come out some day and he asked me what our best game was. I told him that in the mountains down around Peru, Indiana, we still had some Incas preserved. He said he had always supposed that Peru was a state by itself, not simply a place in Indiana, but that

he would jolly well like to get a good Inca head to put up in the gun-room at home. He ought to get one, *oughtn't* he?" Mr. Pike here seized the wrench and bent over the engine as if the interview were closed. Horace would not have it so.

"My sister tells me," he insisted indignantly, "that in spite of Lord Hawcastle's most graciously offering to discuss her engagement with you, you bluntly refused. Furthermore you threaten that you will simply decline to go into the matter with Lord Hawcastle's solicitor when he arrives."

"What matter?" Pike asked the question though he seemed already to know.

"The matter of the settlement!" It may be said that Horace exploded this.

"I haven't been entirely asleep since I've been here, son, and from one thing and another, perhaps a word or two your sister let drop, it sort of strikes me that you think a good deal of this French widow-lady that's

with these people. Now suppose you make up your mind to take her for better or worse—what's she going to give you?"

"Nothing! What do you mean!" Horace really roared. Pike continued mild.

"Well, I thought you'd probably charge her—well, a *little,* anyhow. Ain't that the way over here when folks 'form an alliance'?"

A moment brother Horace raged in silence but could contain himself no longer when the other grasped his monkey-wrench and burst vigorously into "Dolly Gray."

"It's impossible for you to understand the motives of my sister and myself in our struggle not to remain in the vulgar herd. But, really, can't you try to comprehend that there is an old-world society, based not on wealth but on that indescribable something that comes of ancient lineage and high birth?" Horace finished on a plaintive note. "You presume to interfere between us and the fine flower of Europe."

Pike straightened up from his engine and spoke with less levity than had marred his previous utterances. "Well, I don't know as the folks around Kokomo would ever have spoken of your father as a 'fine flower,' still he was thought a heap of and when he married your mother—well, I never heard yet that he asked for any 'settlement' with her. I'll bet he was glad enough to get just her alone—even if she didn't bring him a cent."

"You are quite impossible!" Horace meant every word of this. He put great feeling into the simple speech.

" 'Good-bye, Dolly, I must leave you,' " sang Pike.

"There is no profit in continuing this discussion," added Horace with perhaps more acuteness than he had yet displayed.

Tap—tap—tap sounded the hammer of Pike in time to his lyric.

Horace turned loftily upon his heel, thought better of it and again faced the

worker. "And I give you fair warning now we shall act without paying the slightest heed to you." He glowed triumphantly at this. "What have you to say to that, sir?"

Mr. Pike, apparently, had nothing to say yet, perhaps in the exigencies of his labor, a quick pressure, twice repeated, was put upon the horn of the automobile. Accordingly then, to Horace's speech of defiance the crude retort (as common usage has it spelled) was "Honk! Honk!" a brazen mockery of a retort that echoed powerfully in the quiet garden and caused Horace to thrust upward his despairing hands.

"'Good-bye, Dolly, I must leave you—'" sang the absorbed Pike.

Horace turned and went slowly toward the hotel. His walk was indecisive, spasmodic. Thrice he paused and seemed to debate whether he would not return and finally blast the fellow. Apparently he was deterred from this violence by the sight of the fellow's com-

panion who now strolled from the hotel and stood to regard his harried car with a lively interest. He seemed not to see Horace, nor did Horace seem to see the German, after one glance that was meant to be withering. The glance was managed with perhaps less than the usual finesse of Horace in these matters, owing to his recent agitation. He presented a dignified back to the occupants of the garden as he stalked into the hotel. The German, not wotting that he had been withered, strolled idly to the field of labor.

"You make progress, my friend?"

Pike raised from his work, stroked his chin meditatively with the handle of the monkey-wrench and spoke earnestly.

"Doc, your machine is like a good many people. It's got sand in its gear box—" He broke off to regard the flustered Mariano who now sped from the hotel to the gate in the stone wall and noisily locked it. "Hello, that waiter's gone crazy again!" he concluded.

This was quite unjust, as Mariano was merely excited. He now approached the German, triumphantly flourishing the large key to the gate.

"You lock us in then?"

"But, no, Herr von Grollerhagen—I lock someone *out*." Mariano here laid a finger along his nose to convey that he was a strategist of tremendous cunning. "I lock out that bandid who have not been captured. The carabiniere warn us to close all gates for one hour. They will soon have that wicked one—there are two companies of them." He lowered his voice to add, "Monsieur Ribière has much fears."

"Monsieur Ribière is sometimes a fool," responded the German.

"But, Monseigneur, this convict is a Russian," he persisted in a hoarse whisper. The German waved him somewhat curtly away. Mariano shook his head ominously as he went.

Pike grinned after him. "Two companies of soldiers! A town marshall out my way would have had him yesterday."

The German appeared to consider this alleged superiority but briefly.

"My friend," he remarked, "you are teaching me to respect your country not by what you brag but by what you do."

"How's that?"

The other's manner became significant. "I see how a son of that great democracy can apply himself to a dirty machine while his eyes are full of visions of one of its most beautiful daughters."

Pike's face fell to the engine and he peered a moment into its depths before he remarked, "Doc, there's sand in your gear-box!"

"So!" laughed the German.

"Yes! And now you go down to the kitchen and make signs for some of the help to give you a nice clean bunch of rags."

"What is it you ask me to do?" One might

have thought the German had been surprised into hauteur.

"I need some more rags," said the unconscious Pike—"quick, now."

The other favored him with a low, mocking bow, the full beard seeming to glow from the vast smile beneath it. "My friend, I obey." He turned toward the hotel.

"I won't leave the machine—it might not be safe," called Pike.

The German halted. "You fear this famous bandit would steal it?"

"No; but there's parties around here might think it was a settlement."

"I do not understand."

"We're both in the same fix, but get those rags just the same."

"At once, signore," answered the other in Mariano's best manner, and vanished within the hotel.. Alone once more, Pike left the engine and applied himself to the gear-box. He worked more slowly now and sang a song

of slower tempo. "'Oh, Genevieve, sweet Genevieve . . .'" drawled the voice, but the song died at the sound of a distant shot. Pike looked up at this and, listening intently, heard someone cautiously fumble at the lock of the gate behind him. The fumbling was brief. Pike, after a pause, again fell to work, but the song was resumed very softly. Above it he seemed still to listen.

Over the stone wall now appeared the head of a man who climbed cautiously from the lane below. His shoulders followed. He crept from the wall to the top of the pergola above the car and quickly but stealthily along this to where he could survey Pike through the foliage of the lemon tree.

Pike looked up slowly and as slowly stopped his song, his voice fading out on a half-syllable as he encountered the newcomer's alarmed gaze. The latter spoke quickly but in a tongue that left Mr. Pike uninformed.

"Ah, monsieur, si vous étiez un homme de bon coeur! Je ne suis pas coupable——" The tones were strained, feeble, panting.

"There ain't any use in the world your talking to me like that," broke in Pike quickly.

"Ah, you are an Englishman?" panted the other.

Pike arose at this and stepped back. "That'll be about all of *that*. You come right down from there!"

The newcomer's voice lifted, almost cracked, with a sudden hope. "An American!'

"They haven't made me anything else yet."

The other swung himself quickly to the ground where he leaned against the car for a support that was plainly needed. "Thank God for that!"

He was now seen to be a thin, fragile-looking man of middle age, the face haggard and worn but with a look of refinement unmistakable even under his several days' stubble of

beard. He wore no hat and his thatch of gray hair was in wild disorder. He was coatless and his white shirt was soiled with splashes of dried mud, as were his black trousers and tattered shoes. At his throat were the torn remainders of a white collar and a narrow black tie. He was sadly dusty and brambles clung to his lower garments. One sleeve of his shirt had been torn off at the elbow. Altogether he was not a person the Hotel Regina Margherita would have received as a guest without pointed questionings.

Pike studied him keenly as his breathing slowed. And, though neither of them knew it, he was being at that moment as keenly studied by another person. The rear wing of the hotel still regarded the scene with eyes apparently blank, but one of the awninged windows was no longer sightless.

Lady Creech, aroused by the shot at about the twenty-fifth of her daily forty winks had gone indignantly to her window and now

stared indignantly from behind its sheltering curtain. She had observed the unceremonious entry of the newcomer, and now as he leaned exhausted against the car she brought a pair of excellent binoculars to his minuter study. She saw, and presently became maddened that she could not hear, for a conversation of undoubted significance was proceeding almost at her feet and she could learn no word of it. More keenly she watched, then, always with care to screen herself from observation.

"I'm glad enough I'm an American," remarked Pike after his scrutiny, "but what makes you so glad about it?"

"Because I have suffered in the cause your own forefathers gave their lives for," answered the other quickly. "I am a Russian political fugitive and I can go no farther. But if you give me up I shall not be taken alive—I have no weapon but I can find a way to——" Across his throat he made a sinister pass with the edge of one hand.

"Russian, eh? Say, are you the bandit they're looking for?" He stared at the fugitive with humorous incredulity.

"They call me that." He spread his hands wide before him in a gesture of helplessness. "Do I look like a bandit?"

"How close are they?"

"But there——" He pointed to the wall he had climbed. "Oh, close, close!"

"Did they see you climb that wall?"

"I can't be sure—I think not. There! My God, they have found me!" A loud ringing of the bell at the gate caused him to stagger against the car. Instinctively he threw up one arm as if to guard his face from a blow. The ringing continued and he cowered from it. Pike was now stripping off the blouse he had worked in.

"Do you know anything about gear-box plugs?" he demanded quickly.

"Nothing in the world," confessed the unfortunate desperately.

"'If you give me up I shall not be taken alive—'"

"Then you're a chauffeur all right. Here!" Deftly he slipped the arms of the dazed man into the blouse sleeves and pulled the thing about him. "Now take a good look at this gear-box—it's *underneath* the machine" he added as the other faced him blankly. Hastily and not too gently he forced the fugitive under the rear of the car. "Crawl farther under," he warned, as he rapidly wiped his hands on his last clean rag and put on his own hat and coat which had reposed on the rear seat of the car. As Mariano rushed from the hotel with many and loud words of his coming to the unknown ones who rang at the gate, he saw the American, one careless foot on the car's running-board, placidly light a cigar.

"Corpo de St. Costanzo!" swore Mariano roundly at this display of unconcern at so eventful a moment, and madly he threw open the gate to fall back in consternation before what it revealed. Two hurried-looking carabiniere faced him, their cloaks flung back, their

carbines held alertly forward. Close behind them crowded a noisy throng of the populace, eager, voluble, pushing. "Dio Mio!" swore Mariano again.

The two carabiniere entered briskly. Mariano sprang to close the gate behind them with severe words to the villagers he was thwarting, and turned to his official callers. "We search," said they in fair unison, "for the assassin of Russia."

Mariano was staggered. "My God," said he protestingly, "but not in the garden of the Hotel Regina Margherita!" Mariano conveyed by this that no assassin of whatever country and how desperate soever, would so far forget himself as to seek a refuge within this sacred grove, and that to come here in search of one was therefore to waste time. One of the carabiniere approached Pike. "Have you," he said, "seen a man scale that wall?" but as he said it in words strange to Pike the latter merely replied with great geniality,

"The same to you, Colonel—and wishing you many happy returns."

Mariano, the polyglot, here interposed.

"It is the robber from Russia, signore. They think he dare to come to this our garden of the hotel. The other carabiniere they surround all yonder. These two must search here. They ask you, please, have you seen the assassin climb that wall."

"No!" said Mr. Pike, ingenuously veracious. "What's he exploding about now?" he demanded as the carabiniere again burst into speech.

"He wish you to say has any one go across here?"

"Across here?" Mr. Pike conscientiously indicated the area in question with a sweep of his arm. "No!"

The carabiniere now made another demand. Even Pike caught his meaning for he was pointing with his gun to the person under the car.

"He want to know what person that is," explained Mariano needlessly.

Pike, having apparently lost interest in the inquisition, absently studied the smoke from his cigar as it floated lazily before him in the still air. He seemed to recall himself with difficulty.

"That?" He himself pointed to the person under the car (who now hammered noisily) as if amiably wishing to be certain who it was they asked about. "Oh, *that!* Why, that's the new chauffer from Naples. Hey, Jim!" he called sharply, "get a move on there. We don't want to stop here forever."

Mariano interpreted to the questioner. "He says that is the chauffeur of an illustrious personage who owns the automobile."

The carabiniere bowed his thanks. "Then we go to search most carefully." The two glided furtively into the hidden recesses of the garden.

Mariano's appalled hands celebrated this

display of courage. "Dio mio, signore, but those are the brave men. Perhaps either one shall in a moment meet this powerful assassin who make him dead like that." He snapped thumb and finger to portray the quickness of this death. But now he was distressed anew by the swelling murmur of voices behind the closed gate. The cheated populace clamored there for a sight of whatever delectable business might be going forward. Mariano darted to the gate drew it savagely open and brandished a napkin at the crowd. "Go quickly," commanded Mariano. "But are we not men, my God!" protested the foremost. "Have we not the right to enjoy what the good God sends us?" Mariano stormed. The populace stormed back at him. One of the populace had placed his foot where it would prevent that gate from again closing. He did this unostentatiously and while he argued with Mariano tried to look as if the foot were not his. This abundantly vocalized contest was at its height

when Herr von Grollerhagen issued from the hotel triumphantly waving the rags he had been sent for.

"Is this another eruption of Vesuvius?" he demanded of the apparently bored Pike.

The latter yawned as he took the rags. "No; it's an eruption of colonels trying to arrest a high-school professor." He paused for a brief attention to his cigar. "I've got him under your car there."

"What!" The German was unfeignedly shocked.

"I told them he's your new chauffeur."

The other glanced uneasily at the rabble besieging the gate, then at a distant carabiniere who viciously probed a choice bit of shrubbery with his gun.

"My friend, I fear you do not realize the penalty for protecting a criminal from arrest in this country."

"We'll be proud of the risk," retorted Pike. Then in an undertone he addressed the half-

concealed fugitive. "This is the man that owns the car. You can trust him the same as your own father."

The German remonstrated. "My friend, my friend!"

"Look out," warned Pike. "That Governor's staff is coming back."

The two carabiniere returned from their fruitless quest as Mariano succeeded in closing the gate. "Lazzaroni!" he shouted to the aggrieved ones beyond, and came to where the officers conferred mysteriously.

"You'll have to get a new off front tire, Doc. This one is pretty near gone. Better have Jim here put on the spare when he gets through with that gear-box." Thus Mr. Pike in tones casual but slightly raised.

The German was plainly dismayed. "Do you know what it is you are asking me to do?"

"To put on a new tire!" The other turned away with an exclamation and gesture of despair grimly tinged with humor. He was

disturbed, but this American was incorrigible. Mariano stepped forward to address Pike with an embarrassed bow.

"The carabiniere with all excuses beg if you will command the new chauffeur to step forth from under the automobile."

Mr. Pike became indignant. "*No,* sir; I worked on that machine myself for three hours. And now Jim, there, has got his hands full of nuts and screws and bolts half fastened, and if he lays them down to come out I don't know how long it'll take him to get them back again. Say, we want to get this job finished." There was now a plaintive lift in his voice. "This is *serious!* Tell those boys to go on up Main Street with their Knights of Pythias parade and come back in an hour or two when we haven't got our hands full."

Mariano had become meek. "Si, signore, yes, sir, I tell them." He darted to the two carabiniere who still conferred at a little distance.

Pike seemed again to be engrossed with the car, but he was saying, "Look out, Doc! It'll be your turn in a minute."

Mariano returned, stiffened anew by authority. "Bikoss the chauffeur have only but now arrive those carabiniere ask ten thousand pardons but inquire how long he have been known to his employer." He bowed with embarrassment to the car's owner. It was Pike, however, who answered him.

"How long Doc has known him—why he was raised on Doc's father's farm." He extended a hand toward the German as if for corroboration?

"Oh, if that is so!" exclaimed the relieved Mariano.

"Well, it is so, ain't it, Doc?"

"You have heard my friend say it," replied the other with dignity. Pike again visibly lost interest in this tiring examination. He seemed to direct the new chauffeur in his work.

"If Monseigneur would graciously consent

that I reveal his incognito to those carabiniere," suggested Mariano in a scarce audible undertone.

The German frowned. "Is it necessary?"

"Otherwise I fear they will not withdraw. They have suspicion."

"Very well, but I rely upon them to preserve my incognito from all others."

Mariano bowed deeply. "Monseigneur, they will be discreet." He returned to the waiting officers.

"Make a noise—keep busy!" admonished Pike to the man beneath the car. "But don't you unscrew anything!" he added in quick alarm. Then he glanced up to observe the carabiniere disappearing through the gate which Mariano had opened for them. "Say, you're pretty good," he called to the latter.

"It required but the slightest diplomacy," replied Mariano with a manner he meant to be deprecating but which was, in truth, arrantly boastful.

"He must have mesmerized the militia," added Pike when the maître d'hotel had gone.

"It is safe for a moment," suggested the German.

Pike bent down. "It's all right, old man." He extended a hand and half drew the fugitive to his feet. The latter clutched his throat and brokenly sought to voice his thanks. "Oh, I will pray God for you all my life—I will——"

"Quick," said the German. "My apartments are in the lower floor of this wing. I suggest that we gain them without loss of time. Our inquiring friends may return."

"Right, Doc. Come on, Jim! *We'll* have you out of the woods in no time." He thrust a supporting hand under the fugitive's arm and drew him on. The three had presently gained a door leading to the apartments of Herr von Grollerhagen.

Instantly on their disappearance the curtain of Lady Creech's window was whisked aside

and she popped from the frame with the suddenness of Punch at one of his most dramatic moments. Far out she leaned, her head too nearly upside-down for a lady of her social importance. She was trying to watch the vanished ones even after they had entered the hotel—which was thoughtless enough of her. In cooler moments she would have displayed a better understanding of the known laws of matter.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCERNING A BANDIT

In the sitting-room of one of the choicest suites boasted of in its advertising matter by the Hotel Regina Margherita sat Daniel Voorhees Pike and the gentleman for whom it had that morning been engaged by Monsieur Ribière. They did not speak because they were both intently watching a half-starved man who tore at the food before him on a small table at the upper end of the room. Ravenous though he was, he paused from moment to moment to look or to murmur his thanks to the two who watched him.

"Take it easy, old man," counselled Pike at such times. "Everything is all right—you're among friends." Herr von Grollerhagen re-

mained silent. A long time the fugitive continued to eat under Pike's fascinated regard and the coldly cryptic glances of his companion. Then it appeared that the man's exhausted frame would endure no more. Wearily he turned his chair from the table and drooped before them in all his weakness, only his eyes testifying to his gratitude.

"There! That's better, ain't it, old man?" said Pike. Herr von Grollerhagen sat erect in his chair.

"My American friend," he began crisply, "has just placed himself—and myself—in danger of the penal code of Italy by protecting you from those who sought you. Perhaps you will now be so good as to let us know for what we have incriminated ourselves."

The man he addressed flashed him a frightened look. "You—you are a Russian?"

"There, there, don't be afraid," interposed Pike. "He's only a German."

The fugitive evinced relief at this friendly

assurance. He drew himself erect to say, bitterly, "The Italian journals call me a brigand —inspired by the Russian legation in Rome. My name, it is Ivanoff Ivanovitch. Oh, I have suffered——"

"All right, old man—all right now," put in Pike soothingly. The hunted man seemed to draw support from this and began more calmly.

"I was condemned in Petersburg ten years ago. I was a professor of languages—a translator in the bureau of the Minister of Finance. And then, also—I was a member of the Society of the Blue Fifty, a constitutionalist, you understand——"

"Good for you!" murmured Pike.

"I was able to do but little for our great cause, though I tried."

"How did you try?" The searching eyes of the German were back of this swiftly-put inquiry.

"We had so little money—I transferred

funds of the Government to the Society. Never—never one single ruble for myself." He dealt sharp blows to his breast at this. "It was always for Russia's sake—not mine!"

Herr von Grollerhagen for the moment wore a mask of utter cynicism. "Almost there is but one crime in Russia," he said, "and you committed that—you committed the unpardonable Russian crime of getting yourself caught."

"Through treachery—treachery I could not have suspected. An Englishman lived in Petersburg—he had contracts with the government—I thought he was my best friend. I had married in my student days in Paris—Ah, you will laugh at me, the story is so old. I knew that this Englishman admired my wife. But I trusted him—as I trusted her—and he made my house his home. I had fifty thousand rubles in my desk to be delivered to my society. The police came to search; they found only me—not my wife, nor my English

friend—nor the fifty thousand rubles!" A moment his eyes blazed and his emaciated hands worked convulsively. Then he finished quite simply, "I went to Siberia. Now I search for those two."

"It was they who sent the police?" asked the German.

"After they had taken the money and were beyond the frontier themselves. That is all" —he laughed grimly—"that is all I have against them."

"Looks to me like that would be about enough," drawled Pike.

"Then by your own confession," remarked the German with sudden sharpness, "you are an embezzler and a revolutionist." The culprit drooped again in his chair. Pike quickly intervened.

"Why, the man's down, Doc. You wouldn't go back on him now. Besides," he chuckled at this enjoyable fact, "besides, you've made yourself one of his confederates already."

"Upon my soul, so I have!" The German laughed helplessly. "My friend, I salute you. From my first sight of you in the hotel at Napoli I saw that you were a great man. But as to our—as to Professor Ivanoff here—I do not think the officers went away without suspicion."

"Suspicion!" cried Ivanoff. "But yes; they will watch every exit from the hotel and its grounds. What can I do until darkness——"

"Easy—take it easy now," urged Pike. "Doc here has a lot of rooms for his help, and you're his new chauffeur."

"I was about to suggest it," responded the host quickly and a little grimly. "I have a room that can easily be spared to Professor Ivanoff, and my valet de chambre will find some suitable clothing for him."

"No one will come here to bother you," added Pike.

"No one will bother him for the present," conceded the German.

"And don't you go out," added Pike.

"And he will not go out; I shall take care of that," affirmed the German with curious emphasis.

The fugitive seized Pike's hand and wrung it. He turned to offer his hand to Herr von Grollerhagen but the latter, apparently without noticing this, turned away.

"I shall leave you," he continued, "in good hands. My servants are competent. Meantime, my friend—" he turned to Pike— "I beg your indulgence while I transact some business and make the call for which I came to this place. *Wiedersehn,* my friend!" He took hat and stick from the waiting valet who had entered at his ring, saluted them both and was gone. Pike turned to Ivanoff who stared curiously after their host.

"Now, old man, you're all in, so what you want is a good rest. Just you lie down on that sofa over there and sleep for a couple of hours. I'll keep an eye open around outside here."

"That gentleman who has left—he spoke queerly."

"Pshaw! Doc ain't a bit queer; he's just careful. You go right to sleep just as if you were in your own home. Afterwards you go in there and get a good bath and that boy of Doc's will have some clothes for you—Doc told him to and he's about your size. Then after it's dark we'll figure out some way to get you off. I reckon I can have that automobile in fine shape in another ten minutes. We'll just naturally tuck you away in there and have you out of the county in no time. Come!" He assisted the other to the couch he had indicated and threw a travelling-rug over him. "There! I'll bet that feels good after what you've been through." He walked softly to a window giving upon the garden. Almost before he reached this he heard the deep, regular breathing of the exhausted man, already asleep.

He pulled aside the curtain which had been

drawn when they entered and looked out into the garden. He wished, with as little publicity as possible, to achieve the finishing touches to the motor-car waiting there. His first impression was that this part of the garden was deserted, but a second glance showed him that a marble bench a few steps from the car was now occupied by two people. A little hiss of annoyance escaped him as he surveyed the pair. They were talking animatedly and though he could hear nothing, their manners, their attitudes, their expressive pantomime conveyed the situation of the moment clearly to the watcher's sadly amused eyes. The situation thus advertised was nothing less than the complete enthrallment of brother Horace to the fascinating Comtesse de Champigny who was using her eyes without mercy as she nestled at one end of the bench.

"Ah, but you laugh at me, chère Comtesse," Horace was saying in his most knightly manner.

The charming woman widened her eyes to display a timid, deep concern. "But I laugh to cover my confusion," she said gently. "It is because I cannot believe you are always serious."

Horace seemed cruelly torn by the doubt. He protested almost deliriously. "Serious, chère Comtesse! Like a lady to her knight of old, set me a task to prove how serious I am."

"Ah, gladly!" There was sweet compliance in the beautiful eyes. "Complete, then, those odious matters of that settlement. Overcome the resistance of this bad man who so trouble your sweet sister."

"And you promise me that when that is settled I may speak to you——" Horace became suddenly nervous and swallowed painfully. "—that I may speak to you—I mean——"

"Yes, speak to me," suggested the Comtesse with a flash of womanly compassion.

"Speak to you—as you must know my

heart longs to speak—as I hardly dare——"

The eyes of the Comtesse were upon the ground, her tones of softest velvet. "Ah, that shall be when you please, dear friend!" The creature was defenseless before him. Horace detected as much. He seized her hand to draw it to his lips. But this graceful and affecting salutation was never completed. Horace relinquished the pretty hand as the excited voice of Lady Creech fell upon his ears. He muttered his annoyance and was rewarded by a flash of comprehending sympathy from the lady he bent above.

Along the gravelled path that led around this wing of the hotel came Lady Creech and the Earl of Hawcastle. Her Ladyship was perhaps not more indignant than common, but she was far more perturbed than she usually permitted herself to be. She was gesticulating with an almost Latin fluency and spoke rapidly to his lordship who was for once paying her the profoundest attention. The pair on the

bench arose, the Comtesse shyly placing a hand on the arm of Horace. The latter reflected that there were still more secret places in that joyous garden.

His lordship hailed them and spoke with rather more than his accustomed seriousness, though he strove for an effect of lightness. "Have you any news of that wonderful bandit chase, my young friend?"

"Only that they're still hunting him," replied Horace. "They seem to think he may be about these grounds somewhere; they have the whole place surrounded outside the walls there."

"What did I tell you—" began Lady Creech heatedly. "Now will you——"

His lordship silenced her with his most compelling gesture.

"Of course there's no cause for alarm, Lady Creech." Horace spoke masterfully. "The Comtesse and I are going to explore the grounds directly. I dare say we may bag the brute—if you will come, chère Comtesse."

The Comtesse shuddered prettily but did not withdraw her hand from his arm.

"And on your way," said his lordship, "do you mind stopping at your sister's door and telling her that I should very much like to see her here at once. It's rather important, you know."

"But of course, I shall tell her at once. I say, is there something up?"

His lordship brightened, hesitated, then spoke with quiet emphasis.

"My dear young man, I almost believe I may congratulate you that you and your sister need no longer submit to an odious dictation."

"Ripping—rippin'!" exclaimed Horace joyously, thrilling a little at having dropped the "g" the second time. "Come, chère Comtesse, let's find Sis for his lordship." As they moved away he called back, "I knew we'd fetch the beggar about somehow!"

His lordship turned to the still smouldering

Lady Creech. "You are sure?" he asked quickly.

"I tell you," responded the other, "I couldn't hear a thing they said, they mumbled their words so—dreadful persons!—but upon my soul, Hawcastle, if I couldn't hear, I *saw* enough, didn't I?"

"Upon my soul I believe you did." He interestedly scanned the window from which Pike was still watching with growing impatience.

"Very well—then how long do you propose——"

His lordship again grew imperative. "Listen to me." He drew close to utter his speech into the more sensitive ear of his sister-in-law. "You are missing the point by a mile—the real point. I've no time to explain it now, but remember, you shall not repeat to another soul one single word of what you saw. Don't mistake me—not one word to another soul! You would spoil everything. Now

go, please—better go to your own room—and let me handle this."

She raised a hand in protest but dropped it as Pike appeared in the adjacent doorway. "Dreadful person!" she proclaimed. "I shan't stop on a moment in the creature's presence." She departed majestically on the words, her head back at the angle of offense. Pike strolled easily toward the car, with an unconcerned glance or two at the cloudless sky. Watching at that window it had occurred to him that he had best be out. He suspected that perhaps his presence might discourage these people who seemed to choose this spot of all others for their confidences. He was not alarmed but he preferred that this particular portion of the garden should for the present be his alone. Reaching the car in his sauntering progress he touched various parts of the engine contemplatively. The Earl of Hawcastle drew near, loungingly.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Pike," he began suavely.

"Howdy!" responded the other, unscrewing the cap that admitted water to the tank.

"Mr. Pike it is an immense pity that there should have been any misunderstanding in the matter of your ward's betrothal and approaching marriage."

Pike looked up to speak mildly. "Oh, I wouldn't exactly call it a misunderstanding."

His lordship persisted pleasantly. "It would ill-become a father to press upon the subject of his son's merits——"

"Say," broke in the other plaintively, "I don't want to talk about *him*—I don't want to hurt your feelings any more than I have to."

"Perhaps I might better put it on the ground of your ward's wishes," continued his lordship persuasively— "on the ground of certain advantages of position which it is the desire of herself and her brother to attain."

Mr. Pike remained stubborn. "I can't talk about that with anyone but her," he said.

"There is still another matter," remarked his

lordship with a slight change of manner, "another matter that—" He was interrupted by Mariano who brought to Pike a letter on a tray. Pike seized this with evident relief and studied it with profound thought.

"I fear I do not have your attention, said the other when Mariano had gone.

Pike looked up absently. "Oh, all right, go ahead!"

"I say there is another matter to which I may wish to call your attention."

Pike became at once genial. "Oh, any other matter—all right. I'll talk with you about anything else."

"This is a question distinctly different." He permitted himself a glance at the door to the German's apartment, and there was a slightly sinister emphasis on his concluding words, "Distinctly different!" He turned as Miss Ethel Simpson appeared on the walk behind him. With a final threatening survey of Pike—upon whom it was lost, for the latter

again studied the envelope of the letter he held in his hands—he turned and went to greet the girl.

"My dear child," he said as he protectingly covered her hand, "I wish you to have one more chat with our strangely prejudiced friend here on the subject so dear to all our hearts. And I wish to tell you that I see light breaking through our clouds. Even if he still prove obdurate, do not be downcast—all will be well." He went on through the winding aisle of cypress, his voice floating back benignly—"All will be well!"

Miss Simpson advanced toward the man who still regarded his unopened letter.

CHAPTER IX

AS TO THE HUMAN BEINGS IN KOKOMO AND ELSEWHERE

The emotional stress to which Miss Simpson had been subjected now betrayed itself cruelly in her face. Her lids were reddened, her mouth drawn, her radiance abated. These ravages cut to the heart of Pike as he noted them.

"Poor child," he said, "don't you think I don't know what a hard time you've been having. I'm awful sorry——"

"I didn't come here for sympathy from *you!*"

"Of course not!" He laughed away this absurdity rather painfully, then resumed, "But I'm mighty glad you are here, just the

same. I've just received a letter I want to read to you."

"I didn't come here to hear you read, either."

"I know that, too. But maybe you'll excuse this, because it's bound to be important. You see when I got your cable there at home I wrote right off to Jim Cooley, our vice-consul at London, to look up the records of these Hawcastle folks and write to me here how they stand in their own community."

"What!" Miss Simpson was at once appalled.

"What's thought of them by the best citizens of their home town and so on," explained the other ingenuously.

The girl shuddered. "You had the audacity —*you*—to pry into the affairs of the Earl of Hawcastle!" There was rage in her tones, but the offender persisted.

"Why, I'd have done that—I wouldn't have stopped at anything—I'd have done that if it had been the Governor of Indiana himself."

He instinctively lowered his voice as he spoke of this monstrous extreme.

The girl was unimpressed. "You didn't consider it indelicate to write to strangers about my intimate affairs?"

"Why, Jim Cooley isn't a stranger. Jim's home-folks. His office used to be in the same building with mine."

"Oh! it's horrible! And when they find what you've done—Oh, hadn't you shamed me enough without this?"

"There, there, you poor child! I expect this letter'll show who ought to be ashamed. Come, now, let's just sit down on that bench there and try to work things out together."

She emitted a slight, bitter laugh, but she moved to the bench and sat at the extreme end. "Work things out together!" she exclaimed with doleful resignation. Sadly Pike noted the distance she had placed herself from him and her averted, indignant face.

"I haven't opened this letter yet," he be-

gan. "I want you to read it first. But I ought to tell you there's probably things in it that will hurt your feelings, sort of, maybe."

"How?" she demanded icily, without turning her head.

"Well, I haven't a doubt that Jim will have some statements here that will show you I'm right about these people. If he got the facts, I *know* he will."

"How do you know it?"

"Because I've had experience enough of life——"

"In Kokomo?" This interruption was spirited and deeply scornful. She almost relished the scorn of it. But the other was undaunted.

"Yes, *ma'am!* There's just as many kinds of people in Kokomo as there are in Pekin, and I didn't serve a term in the Indiana legislature without learning to pick underhanded men at sight. Now this Earl, let alone his having a bad eye, he's altogether too much on the

stripe of T. Cuthbert Bentley to suit me." The girl made a sharp gesture of impatience which he disregarded, though he slowly opened the envelope as he continued rather drawlingly, "T. Cuthbert was a Chicago gentleman with a fur-lined overcoat. He opened up a bank in our town and when he caught the Canadian express three months later all he left in Kokomo was the sign on the front door." He paused briefly. "*That* was painted on! But there, here's Jim's letter; read it yourself."

She snatched the sheet from him and turned her eyes upon it after she had employed them ably to glare at him. She dashed confidently into the letter.

"DEAR DAN:

The Earldom of Hawcastle is one of the oldest in this kingdom and the St. Aubyns have distinguished themselves in the forefront of English battles from Crécy and Agincourt to Sebastopol."

She read in ringing tones, with a triumphing glance at the puzzled man beside her.

"The present holder of the title came into it unexpectedly through a series of accidental deaths. He was a younger son's younger son and had spent some years in Russia in business—what, I do not know—under another name, or rather, probably, under one of the numerous family names. I suppose he assumed this that the historic name of St. Aubyn might not be tarnished by trade associations. He has spent so much of his life out of England that it is difficult to find out much about him. Nothing here in his English record is seriously against him, though everything he has is mortgaged well up to its value, the entail of the estate having been broken."

The reader paused to flash an amused glance at the now depressed Pike.

"As to his son, the Honorable Almeric St. Aubyn, no objection seems to be alleged against his character. He appears to be thought harmless enough. That's all I've been able to learn."

She finished with an air of triumphant finality and arose with a laugh.

"A terrible indictment, indeed! So that was what you relied upon to convince me of my mistake?"

"Yes—it *was!*" admitted the distressed Pike.

"Do you assert there is one word in this seriously discreditable to the reputation of Lord Hawcastle or Mr. St. Aubyn?"

"No," confessed the other, almost humbly.

"And remember it is the testimony of your own friend—of your own *detective.*" This was scornful indeed.

Pike faced her, rueful, crestfallen. "Oh, if I wanted a detective I wouldn't get Jim Cooley—at least not any more."

"Then I shall tell Lord Hawcastle," she answered almost graciously, "that you will be ready to take up the matter of the settlement the moment his solicitor arrives."

"No—I wouldn't exactly do that."

"Why not?" she challenged.

Mr. Pike spoke doggedly. "Because I won't take up the matter of that settlement with him or anyone else."

"Do you mean," she retorted, angry again,

"that you cannot see what a humiliation your interference has brought upon you in this?"

"Oh, I see that plain enough."

"Then have you any further objection to my alliance with Mr. St. Aubyn?"

"It isn't an alliance with Mr. St. Aubyn that you're after," declared the other bluntly.

"Then what am I—" scornful indeed was the emphasis with which she freighted the final word—*"after?"*

"You're after something there isn't anything to," he began slowly. "And if I'd let you buy what you want with your money and your whole life you'd find it as empty as the morning after Judgment Day." The girl turned from him, smiling and superior. His drawl became again noticeable as he saw this. "You think because I'm a jay country lawyer I don't understand it and couldn't understand you. Why, bless your heart, we have just the same thing at home. There was little Annie Hoffmeyer. Her Pa was a carpenter and doing well. But

Annie couldn't get into the Kokomo Ladies' Literary Club and her name didn't show up in the society column four or five times every Sunday morning, so she got her father to give her the money to marry Willie Seymour, the minister's son—and a regular minister's son he was. I don't know whether she told old Hoffmeyer it was a settlement or not, but he let her have her way and went into debt and built them a nice little house up on North Elm Street and Annie 'formed her alliance' as you say over here. That was two years ago. Annie's working at the depot candy-stand now and the other half of the—the alliance—is working at the hotel bar—in front—drinking up what's left of old Hoffmeyer's settlement."

"And you say you understand," replied the indignant girl—"you who couple the name of a tippling yokel with that of a St. Aubyn, a gentleman of distinction!"

"Distinction? I didn't know he was distinguished."

The girl looked at him pityingly. "His ancestors have fought with glory on every field of battle from Crécy and Agincourt to the Crimea," she said in ringing tones.

"Yes, but you won't see much of his ancestors."

"He bears their name!"

"Yes, and it's the name you want. Nobody could look at you and not know it wasn't *him*. It's the name. And I'd let you buy it if it would make you happy—if you didn't have to take the people with it."

"The 'people!' " The girl turned from him angrily.

"Yes, the whole gang. Can't you see how they're counting on it? It's in their faces, in their ways! This Earl—don't you see he expects to live on you? Do you think the son would get your settlement? Why, a Terre Hut' pickpocket could get it away from him—let alone that old man of his! What do *you* think would become of the 'settlement'?"

She controlled herself to answer him stonily. "Part of it would go to the restoration of Hawcastle Hall and part to Glenwood Priory."

"Glenwood Priory?"

"That is a part of the estate where Almeric and I will live until Lord Hawcastle's death."

"Then you can be sure mighty little of that settlement would come around 'Glenwood Priory.'" He spoke the name with a grim amusement. "And this old lady—this Mrs. Creech you've been travelling with——"

"*Lady* Creech!" she corrected him sharply.

"All right! But don't you think *she's* counting on it? And this French lady that's with them—isn't she trying to land your brother? I tell you, this whole crowd is on the track of John Simpson's money."

She blazed at this. "Silence! You have no right to traduce them. Do you place no value upon heredity, upon high birth?"

"Do I? Why, I think so much of it that I know John Simpson's daughter doesn't need

anybody else's to help her out!" He regarded her now with honest admiration. "She's fine enough and I think she's sweet enough—and I know from the way she goes for me that she's brave enough—to stand on her own feet."

Strangely a little moved despite her anger by this surprising speech, she answered somewhat breathlessly, "But this is beside the point. I know exactly what I want in life and I couldn't change it now if it were otherwise. I gave Almeric my promise, it was forever, and I shall keep it."

"You can't; I'm not going to let you."

"I throw your interference to the winds. I shall absolutely disregard it. I shall marry without your consent."

Pike grinned as he demanded, "Do you think *they'd* let you—without the settlement?"

"I think you'll let me"—she broke off to laugh at him—"especially after this terrible letter."

He indicated the sheet she still held. "By

the way, are you sure that was all Jim said—did you finish it?"

"I think so. No—it says 'over.'" She turned the page, attentively conned the few lines there and looked up at Pike with some quick almost shy astonishment.

"Well, read the rest of it, won't you?"

"It appears to concern a matter quite personal to yourself," she rejoined with an icy accession of dignity. She placed the letter in the envelope and turned as if to leave. "Please remember," she added, "I have not read anything on the last page."

"Well, neither have I." He reached for the letter. She stepped back, then dropped it at the end of the bench almost timidly. Pike secured it, slowly removing the letter from the envelope. She stared at him with breathless amazement. For the moment she was not hostile. She turned again as if to go, yet hesitated. The garden glowed red now in the sunset light, and in upon their moment's em-

barrassed silence came the song of men beyond the wall accompanied by a guitar, mellow and vibrant. Together they listened briefly.

"Those are the fishermen coming home," volunteered the girl, softly human under the witchery of those blending voices.

"It's mighty pretty, but it's kind of foreign and lonesome, too," Pike replied with a sad little chuckle. "I'd rather hear something that sounded more like home." His voice grew a bit tremulous. "I expect you've about forgotten everything like that, haven't you?"

"Yes," she said, gently enough.

"It seems funny, now," Pike went on, "but out on the ocean coming here I kept kind of looking forward to hearing you sing—like the fool I was, I kept thinking you might sing for me some evening—'Sweet Genevieve' maybe—you know that, don't you?"

She repeated the title, reminiscently. "I used to, I think—but it's rather old-fashioned and common, isn't it?"

"I expect so," he admitted. "Maybe that's the reason I like it so much. But of course I know now I can't expect you to sing it for me."

"We were both disappointed." She had an absurd impulse to laugh long and loud, for she suddenly beheld her morning's vision of the dear old Mr. Pike who would have behaved so differently. "Yes, it was hard on both of us," she added. He made no reply; seemed not, indeed, to hear her, but stared blankly ahead of him. A long moment she surveyed him thoughtfully as he seemed to dream there in the deepening twilight, then she walked slowly away. Pike was recalled to himself by the slight scuffing of her steps on the walk. Slowly he unfolded his letter to the last page.

I'm sorry [he read] that old man Simpson's daughter thinks of buying a title. Somehow I have a notion that may hit you, Dan. I haven't forgotten how you always kept that picture of her on your desk. And the old man thought so much of you I had an idea he hoped she'd come back some day and marry a man from home.

"You double-barrelled, laminated chump!" Thus Pike apostrophized the absent James G. Cooley. "I don't wonder she said she hadn't read it," he mused. Then his face lighted with a most radiant amazement. "But she had, and she didn't go away—that is, not *right* away!"

The voice of Lord Hawcastle recalled him from far, vast surmises. His lordship had approached briskly.

"Mr. Pike, your ward tells me that you still remain strangely obdurate in a certain matter we have discussed."

"I don't want to seem rough with you," remarked Pike in his mildest tone, "but I've meant what I said."

"Doubtless. There is, however, a certain other question——"

"I'll talk about anything else."

"Excellent!" His lordship seemed strangely cheerful and allowed his next words to fall trippingly indeed from his tongue. "Late this

afternoon I developed a great anxiety concerning the penalty prescribed by Italian law for those unfortunate and impulsive individuals who connive at the escape or concealment of—shall we say of certain other unfortunates who may be—let us put it quite vulgarly—wanted by the police." He regarded the man before him keenly, striving to read his face in the dusk.

"So you're anxious about that, are you?" inquired Pike easily.

"So deeply anxious that I ascertained the penalty for it. You may confirm my information by appealing to the nearest carabiniere just outside the wall there. The minimum penalty for one whose kind heart has thus betrayed him is two years' imprisonment, and Italian prisons I am credibly informed are quite ferociously unpleasant places."

"Being in jail any place isn't much like an Elks' Carnival," observed the attentive Mr. Pike.

"There would be no escape, even for a citizen of your admirable country if his complicity were established, especially if he happened to be—as it were—caught in the act." The speaker glanced significantly over his shoulder. The salon of Herr von Grollerhagen was now lighted and a shadow moved across its drawn curtain. Mr. Pike continued to stare ahead of him. He lighted a cigar, still staring. As the flame of the match blazed up it was seen to be a meditative stare. Then he faced the Earl of Hawcastle.

"Talk plain—talk plain!" he admonished grimly.

His lordship became animated. "My dear young friend, imagine that a badly wanted man appears upon the pergola there and makes an appeal of I know not what nature to one of your fellow-countrymen who—for the purpose of illustration—is at work upon this car. Say that the too-amiable American conceals this fugitive under the car and afterward, with the

connivance of a friend, deceives the officers of the law and shelters the criminal—for example, in a room of that lower suite yonder." His voice showed now a trace of excitement as the shadow of a man rested briefly upon the curtain veiling the lighted room. "Imagine," he continued swiftly, "that the shadow which at this moment appears on that curtain were the shadow of the wanted man—*then* would you not agree that a moderate and reasonable request made to this countryman of yours might be acceded to?"

"What would be the nature of that request?" inquired the profoundly interested Mr. Pike.

"It would concern a certain alliance—it might even concern a certain settlement."

"If the request were refused what would the consequences be?"

"But I have already indicated them—I had thought not too subtly. Two years at least for the American and the friend who had been his

accessory. Really, I should fancy it a disastrous situation."

"Yes; it looks like it," conceded Pike.

"And now," continued the other with sharp insistence, "if this fellow-countryman of yours were to be assured that the law would be made to take its course if a favorable answer were not received—say by ten o'clock tonight—what, in your opinion, would his answer be?" The manner of his lordship conveyed that there could be but one answer under these distressing circumstances. His face was lighted with a relishing smile of assurance.

"Well," began Pike plaintively, "it would all depend on just which one of my countrymen you caught—you know there are such a lot of us. Now if it depended on the one I know most about—why he'd tell you he'd see you in hell first." He straightly regarded the Earl of Hawcastle.

The light died all at once from his lordship's smile. Now his mouth was merely distorted.

CHAPTER X

HERR VON GROLLERHAGEN SAVES HIMSELF

In the dimly lit saloon of Herr von Grollerhagen Pike sat where he could survey through the open double doors a brilliantly lighted conservatory and hall beyond. The unseen orchestra rendered an aria from "Pagliacci" that admirably portrayed his dejection as through the fronds of palm and blossoming oleanders he beheld a group of people at two small tables being served by Mariano with their after-dinner coffee. Horace, resplendent in evening dress, conversed tenderly with the laughing Comtesse de Champigny. The Honorable Almeric appeared to be slightly more bored then usual, this perhaps because of the cloud of troubled abstraction under which

Miss Ethel Simpson seemed to be laboring. The girl had refused coffee and sat with bent head and an empty gaze, unconscious even of her prettiest evening frock now in its first wearing. Lady Creech, stately in black velvet and lace, was also absorbed, though she glared indignantly about her from time to time and showed a growing impatience apparently with the world at large. The Honorable Almeric yawned and accused the girl of "thinkin' a bit." He had already remarked this curious weakness of hers. She denied it now, though with barely a glance at her accuser and without her wonted smile. Undoubtedly she was thinking a bit; thinking of that curious young man she so detested and who had yet produced in her so profound a sensation of doubt. The doubt brought her great discomfort because she was unable to analyze it. Certainly it was not doubt of herself nor the Honorable Almeric, though curiously in spite of herself she would find her eyes now and then upon

him with a sort of questioning and appraisal that was almost cool. Nor could it be doubt of those "nobler things" for which she was striving. It was doubt that kept coming to trouble her and that would not unmask itself.

Pike from his obscurity kept sharp eyes on the group. Beneath his greater trouble he was calling himself an imbecile for not having brought his own "dress suit." He hadn't realized that people would don such clothes without the provocation of those ceremonious affairs that evoked them in his home town. But it seemed they wore them here as a mere matter of daily routine . . . He again called himself an imbecile, this time for dwelling upon minor trifles at such a moment. He looked at his watch and began impatiently to pace back and forth over the soft carpet.

At last he halted and breathed a sigh of relief. Down the hall, through flowering shrubs, his eye had caught the tall figure of Herr von Grollerhagen making a stately way toward

his door. His valet, preceding him, entered the salon, flooded it with light and stood alert at the doorway. Ribière quickly appeared from an inner chamber at the valet's ring, and he, too, stood alert. The German entered. He was in evening dress, rather overwhelmingly so to Pike's first glance. His overcoat was a sumptuous thing of sables, loosely worn and revealing an order-ribbon at the lapel of his dress-coat. The waiting valet took the overcoat, the dazzling hat, and the swiftly removed white gloves. Ribière approached his employer discreetly when the valet had gone.

"You have telegraphed for the information?" asked the German.

"But perfectly, monsieur," answered Ribière and followed the valet.

Pike advanced at the conclusion of these ceremonies. "I'm mighty glad you've come, Doc—I've been waiting for you."

"I have dined with an old tutor of mine. Once every year I come here to do that," ex-

plained the other. The valet had returned with a tray containing vodka and cigarettes which he placed on a convenient table, withdrawing again. The German seated himself at the table, poured himself a modest draft of the spirit and lighted a cigarette. Pike after a final survey of the group in the hall beyond went to the doors and carefully closed them.

"And you?" inquired the German. "I suppose you dined with the charming young lady, your ward, and her brother, as you expected."

"No—you see they have friends of their own here and——"

"So I have observed." The speaker sipped from his glass.

"Oh, I didn't mind their not asking me," insisted Pike with a fine assumption of cheerfulness. "The fact is, these friends of hers are trying to get me to do something I can't do——"

"You need not tell me that, my friend. I have both eyes and ears; I understand."

Pike came to the table now in frank distress. "Well, I wish you understood the rest, because it isn't easy for me to tell you. Doc, look here, I'm afraid I've got you into a pretty bad hole."

"Ah! That, I fear, I do not understand." The speaker seemed to be more curious than alarmed.

"I'm afraid I have," continued Pike remorsefully. "You and that Ivanoff in there—poor devil—and me—all three of us. You see, this Hawcastle *knows,* and he knows it as well as I know you're sitting in that chair, that we've got that poor fellow in there—right in that room."

"But surely you can trust Lord Hawcastle not to mention our little affair. This gentleman must know that the consequences for you as well as for me would be, to say the least, embarrassing. Surely you made that clear to him."

Pike grinned ruefully. "No; he made it clear to me. Two years in jail is the minimum,

and if I don't make up my mind by ten o'clock to do what he wants me to do—"

"What does he want you to do?" asked the German quickly as he looked at his watch.

"You see, that young lady's father trusted me to look after her, and if I won't promise to let her pay seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars for—that—well, you've seen it around here today, haven't you?"

"I have indeed observed—it—if you refer to the sprightly son of Lord Hawcastle."

"Well; if I don't consent to do that I reckon Ivanoff has to go back to Siberia and you and I to one of these Italian jails."

"He threatens that!"

"Oh, he'll *do* it all right! It isn't only a threat."

"And what do you mean to do?" The other regarded him sharply.

"There wouldn't be any trouble about that," said the distressed Pike, "if it was only me. That would be too easy. They could land me

for two years—" He swallowed with difficulty—"or for twenty years. What makes it so hard is that I can't do what they want even to get you and Ivanoff out of the hole. You see, it ain't my money. About all I can do, Doc, is to ask you to forgive me for taking that fellow in the way I did, and to warn you to get away before they come down on me. This Englishman's *got* me, Doc. Don't you see how it stands? Ivanhoff can't get away——"

"No; I think he can't."

"They've got this militia all around the place."

"I passed through a cordon of the carabiniere as I came in," said the German musingly.

"But you could get away, Doc." Pike became urgent. "Up to ten o'clock you can come and go just as you like."

The German arose, plainly animated by this thought. "But so might you come and go

until ten o'clock. You have not thought of that."

"No and I won't think of it," declared the other stoutly. "But as for you——"

"As for me—" The other debated a moment then cheerfully concluded, "I shall go."

"Good!" exclaimed Pike. "That's part of the load off my mind. I can't bear to think of the rest of it. I haven't known how to tell that poor cuss in there."

"So?" The German had donned the coat of sables and taken hat and gloves from the valet who had brought them. "Call our friend yonder," he directed the latter. Ivanoff appeared to the summons. Very pale and haggard he was, though shaven now and clad in garments that at least told of no hurried flight. He entered the salon slowly, and quietly stood before them, head and shoulders bowed, body drooping. The German spoke.

"Ivanoff, some unexpected difficulties have arisen. Your presence here has been dis-

covered by persons who wish evil to this gentleman who has protected you. He can do nothing further to save you unless he betrays a trust that has been left to him."

The Russian clutched his throat with a strangling gesture and looked pitifully from the speaker to Pike. The latter came to stand before him humbly.

"It's the truth, old man. I can't do what they want me to, even to save you."

The other bowed his head once more. "Then I thank you for what you tried to do," he said in a scarce audible voice.

"You have until ten o'clock," suggested the cheerful German; "meantime my American friend believes Naples to be a safer place for me. And so, *auf wiedersehn,* gentlemen!" He stepped lightly to the door.

Pike followed quickly and grasped his hand.

"Good-bye, Doc, and God bless you!"

"To our next meeting, my friend," said the still cheerful German, and was gone.

Pike turned from closing the door after him to be amazed by a singular change in the manner of the fugitive. Throwing his head up he went rapidly to the table, examined the cigarettes in their silver box and significantly touched the bottle of vodka. "Ah, I thought so," he gasped.

"Thought what?" demanded the amazed Pike.

"Russian! That man, your friend, who calls himself von Grollerhagen, he is a Russian. Not only that—he is a Russian noble. Oh, I see it in a hundred ways that you cannot—his appearance, his voice, his manner of addressing me just now."

Pike seemed unable to share the dismay that this suspicion apparently aroused in the breast of his charge. "Whatever he is, didn't he help us this afternoon. I'd trust that man to the bone."

"You don't know what it means. Perhaps he helped me but to make sure I should not

further escape. His men have watched me every moment since I came here. A thousand times since I entered this room I have felt it was inevitable that I should go back to Siberia." He fell weakly into a chair and bowed his face in his hands.

"I know you feel mighty bad and I don't blame you, but perhaps—perhaps——"

"There is no perhaps for me," muttered the other. "I look back, and there never was any perhaps after I met Hélène."

Pike's hand went to his head. Thoughtfully he rumpled then smoothed his hair. "Hélène!" he repeated absently.

"Hélène was my wife; she who sent me to Siberia—she and my dear, accursed English friend."

"What was his name?" demanded the other, still thoughtful.

"His name—it was Glenwood. I shall not forget that name soon."

"What was he doing in Russia?"

"I have told you; he had contracts—he supplied hydraulic machinery to the Government." He looked up in quick hope. "Does the name Glenwood mean anything to you? Tell me, have you heard that name?"

Pike frowned thoughtfully but a moment longer. "No, I don't know any Glenwood." He added to himself, "And there must be a million Hélènes in France."

The other bowed his head again. "Oh, I did pray God to let me meet them before I was taken." He sat up again with an effort to throw off the pain. "But I talk too much of myself. I wish to know—you—you will be safe, yes?"

"Oh, I'll be fine," rejoined Pike with a lifting cheerfulness. "Don't you worry about me. "Why, I'll—" He was interrupted by a quick knock at the door.

"The carabiniere—they have come," gasped Ivanoff.

"Steady!" warned Pike. He looked at his

watch. "They won't come before ten, and we have a good hour yet. You go back into that room. Just remember, we don't throw our hands into the discard until we're called. We keep on raising every time. Understand?" With a hand on his shoulder he almost thrust the Russian into the adjoining room and pulled the door quickly to. Regaining the center of the room he paused a moment to again rumple and smooth his hair. "Hélène!" he muttered. He glanced up as the knocking was repeated.

"Come in!" he called.

CHAPTER XI

MR. PIKE CROSS-EXAMINES

The door opened upon Mariano who stood bowing upon its threshold.

"Pardon, signore! Miladi Creesh—she ask would you speak to her but a few minutes."

Pike relaxed wearily from a certain expectancy he had felt. "All right, all right," he assented dully, "where is she?"

Mariano seemed to erase himself from the doorway. In his place appeared Lady Creech. She glared briefly at Pike, then swept formidably to the room's center.

"Come right in, ma'am," urged Pike, a faint note of distrust sounding through the phrase. Lady Creech stiffened into an armchair and began with a frigid aloofness as if

the person she addressed could not be recognized under any circumstances.

"I need scarcely inform you that this interview is not of my seeking. Quite the contrary. It is intensely disagreeable to me. But my brother-in-law feels that someone well acquainted with Miss Granger-Simpson's ideals and her inner nature should put the case finally to you before we proceed to the extreme measures my brother-in-law has determined upon."

"Yes, ma'am," said Pike patiently.

"And don't mumble your words if you expect me to listen to you." warned Lady Creech indignantly.

"Go on, ma'am!" Pike was loudly cordial.

"My brother-in-law has made us aware of the present state of affairs and I need not say that we are quite in sympathy with my brother-in-law's attitude as to what should be done to you."

"Yes, ma'am, and what do you think ought

to be done to me?" This was in a tone of genial inquiry.

"If in the kindness of our hearts we condone your offense we insist upon your accession to our reasonable demands." The speaker wore the impressive manner of an ambassador delivering an ultimatum.

"By ten o'clock?" queried Pike, a bit sardonically.

"Quite so!" Lady Creech shut her lips firmly on the words.

"You say your brother-in-law has told all of you. Has he told Miss Ethel?"

Lady Creech moved her head ever so slightly. "It has not been thought proper." Her tone took on the flavor of an informing rebuke. "Young girls should be shielded from everything disagreeable."

"Yes, *ma'am!*" Pike's agreement to this was hearty. "That's the idea that got me into this trouble."

"I say," continued the ambassadress aus-

terely, "that this young lady who seems by some absurd technicality to be your ward is considered by all of us who understand her, and by herself as well, to be infinitely more *my* ward."

"Go on, ma'am," urged the attentive Pike.

"She came to me something more than a year ago——"

"Did you advertise?"

Lady Creech winced and for the first time during the interview condescended to glance at the questioner. The glance, however, was meant to be withering. "I suppose it is your intention to be offensive."

The other protested mildly but earnestly. "No, ma'am; I didn't mean anything by that. But you see I've handled all her accounts, and her payments to you——"

Lady Creech became superbly crushing as she slightly raised a hand to stem this embarrassing flow. "We will omit all tradesmanlike references, if you please. What Lord Haw-

castle wished me to impress upon you is not only that you will ruin yourself but that you will put a blight upon the life of the young person whom you are pleased to consider—" she permitted herself something very like a titter of scorn. "—your ward. Remember she has studied under my instruction deportment, manners, ideals, which have lifted her above the American circumstance of her birth. She has ambitions. If you stand in the way of them she will wither. She will die like a caged bird. All that was sordid about her parentage she has cast off—" Lady Creech paused for an able summing up. "We have thought," she concluded, "that we might make something of her."

"Yes ma'am; make something out of her—I see!"

"Something *of* her," corrected the other quickly. "Something better of her. We offer her this alliance with a family that for seven hundred years——"

Pike wearily raised a hand of his own. "Yes, ma'am, I know—Crécy and Agincourt!" He seemed to have learned when it was coming.

"With a family," continued Lady Creech proudly, "that has never been sullied by those low ideals of barter and exchange which seem to be the governing ideals of your own weird countrymen."

"Sullied—seven hundred years!" Pike was fumbling in a pocket of his coat. "Why, look here, Mrs. Creech——"

Lady Creech shuddered poignantly, half arose from her chair at this affront, then sank resignedly back. The unconscious Pike continued:

"I've got a letter right here that tells me your brother-in-law was once in business—and I respect him for it—only a few years ago."

"A letter from whom?"

"Why, from Jim Cooley, our vice-consul at London. Jim isn't the wisest man in the

world, but he seems to have this right, and he says that Mr. Hawcastle——"

This was beyond endurance. Lady Creech exploded. "*Mr.* Hawcastle!"

Pike grinned at her in friendly embarrassment. "Well," he continued placatingly, "I can call a person Colonel or Cap or Doc or anything of that kind but I just plain don't know how to use the kind of words you have over here for that sort of thing——"

"That sort of thing!" repeated the other shudderingly.

"Just let me run on in my own way. I'm not meaning at all to hurt your feelings. But when you talked about low ideals of barter and exchange—anyway, isn't Jim Cooley right? He says your brother-in-law was in business in Russia—" Mr. Pike here paused curiously. It was as if the sound of his own voice had startled him to some new thought. "In business in Russia—" he repeated slowly, meditatively.

"This is quite beside the point," expostulated his listener.

Mr. Pike had become almost bland. At least he beamed amiably upon his guest.

"But it *is* the point, when you boast your superiority to our low tradesmen ideals. You offer my ward an alliance with a family that you say has never been sullied by trade and now I discover that a prominent member of it once actually worked for his living. And between us, now, isn't Jim right. Isn't that the truth?"

Guilt was expressed in the very anger of Lady Creech's retort; she must confess the scandal. "Since some of your vulgar American officials have been spying about—" she desperately muttered.

Pike's glance had quickened strangely. He leaned upon the back of a chair to survey the lady with a sort of eager cordiality.

"Well, so far so good. Your brother-in-law was in business in Russia. Of course I don't

say it was peddling shoe-strings on the corner or selling frankfurters——"

A slight but eloquent scream of indignation marked this brutality.

"No doubt something more dignified than that," continued the affable Mr. Pike. "Probably he was the agent for a wooden butter-dish factory—something of that kind."

Lady Creech was stung to explanation. "He had contracts with the Russian government itself," she proclaimed, as if this might now and then be condoned even in a St. Aubyn.

The eyes of Mr. Pike for a moment blinked rapidly, yet he smoothly and quickly controlled whatever agitation he might have felt.

"Not," he inquired most casually, "not for mining—for hydraulic machinery?"

The witness bridled but did not deny this imputation.

"And even so," she haughtily rejoined, "he protected the historic name of St. Aubyn."

Mr. Pike instinctively tightened his grasp

on the chair back before him. The lean, freckled hands were now rosy indeed. "By God, I believe you!"

"Don't mumble your words," warned Lady Creech, having for once a genuine grievance. Pike had not mumbled the words, yet he had uttered them in his lowest tone. Now again, however, except for the tightly clenched hands, he appeared to be but the friendly inquirer.

"Had your brother-in-law ever lived at Glenwood Priory?"

The lady showed herself both indignant and puzzled. "Is your mind wandering? The Priory belonged to Hawcastle's mother. Can you state its connection with our subject?"

"Why, of course—" the speaker was blandly ingratiating. "That's how he protected the historic name of St. Aubyn—that's the very name he took—Glenwood!"

"And what of that?" The manner of Lady Creech indicated that she had borne all that one of her position might be expected to bear.

"God moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform," answered her interlocutor, suddenly awe-struck.

"Oblige me by omitting blasphemous allusions in my presence," requested the other icily. She arose. "What answer are you prepared to make to Lord Hawcastle?"

Pike, alertly poised by his chair, seemed not at first to hear her. He turned at last. "Tell your brother-in-law he can have my answer in ten minutes; he can come to me here for it. I'll give it in the presence of the young lady and her brother."

Lady Creech swept to the door. "Her brother—certainly. He is in perfect sympathy with our attitude. As for Miss Granger-Simpson knowing anything of this most shocking affair—no!"

"No?" inquired Pike mildly.

"I shall not permit her to come near here. As her chaperone, I refuse. We—we all refuse."

"I'm disappointed," said Pike, still more mildly.

"I shall tell Lord Hawcastle——"

"Ten minutes from now and in this room."

"But Miss Granger-Simpson on no condition whatever," concluded her ladyship as she swept past the door Pike opened for her.

For a short second he stood with his back to the door, a second for quick thought. Then he touched an electric button beside the door and sat at the nearby desk where he wrote hurriedly on a half-sheet of paper. He was inclosing this in an envelope when Mariano knocked. He sealed and addressed the envelope as Mariano entered to his summons.

"Mariano, I want you to take this note to Miss Simpson."

Mariano, ever punctilious, wished to be told if it would be Miss Granger-Seempsone.

"Yes; do you know where she is?"

"But now I see her walk on the terrace alone."

"Give it to her yourself—to no one else, mind—and do it now."

"At once, signore!"

As the door closed upon his messenger Pike strode to the door that had lately shut upon the Russian.

"Ivanoff!" he called. The fugitive appeared, looking about the room in quick apprehension.

"Have they come?" he whispered.

"Not yet." Pike meditated briefly. "Ivanoff, you prayed to see your wife and your friend Glenwood before you went back to Siberia."

The Russian fell back, clutching his throat as if he would strangle the cry there.

"If that prayer is answered through me," continued the other, "will you promise to keep cool—and remember it's my fight?"

"Ah—you wish to play with me!" It was scarce more than a whimper.

"Do I *look* playful?"

The response of the Russian was broken by a bugle that sounded sharply outside the window. "The carabiniere," he cried—"for me!" They rushed to the window that gave upon the street.

"Don't show yourself," warned Pike as he cautiously drew aside the heavy curtain. The Russian craned to peer over his shoulder. "Look," he whispered. "Near the lamp yonder—there by the doors—the carabiniere."

"They've been there since this afternoon," remarked Pike easily, then, struck by a movement in the group, he exclaimed, "But look there—who on earth—who's that they've got with them? Why, good Lord, it's Doc!"

"Did I not tell you," retorted the other sharply, "that he was a Russian? He has betrayed me himself. He was not satisfied that others should. I knew that here I was in the wolf's throat."

"Don't you believe it," insisted Pike. "They got him as he went out." He concluded with

the profoundest pity, "They've arrested poor old Doc!"

"But no; see, they speak respectfully to him; they bow to him——"

"Yes," rejoined Pike grimly, "and in a minute they'll be in here bowing to us. That's probably the way these colonels run you in. Now you——"

There was a sharp knock at the double doors. Pike urged Ivanoff rapidly toward the door of his chamber. "Now you remember—wait there till I call you—and it's my fight."

The Russian turned hysterically. "You promise that before I am taken I shall see——"

Mariano appeared. He had knocked twice; he had been told to hurry. Mr. Pike seemed not to observe him but continued in a most domineering manner to the now cowering Ivanoff. "—And don't you forget what I've been telling you—you get the sand out of that gear-box the first thing tomorrow morn-

ing or I'll see that you draw your last pay Saturday night. Get out, now!"

"Mees Granger-Seempsone," announced Mariano when the door had closed upon the meekly retreating figure of the Russian.

"All right, Mariano. Have her come in, please!"

CHAPTER XII

UNSUSPECTED ROMANCE IN THE PAST OF HIS LORDSHIP

The girl advanced slowly into the room. She was icy of manner and the poise of her head was defiant, yet her hands worked nervously upon the note that had summoned her, crumpling it—seeming to knead it. Pike's glance at her was wholly impersonal; for the moment she was not a girl whose photograph he had so absurdly cherished but a mere figment of the law, a "ward" and no more, as he himself had become little more than a lawyer.

"I'm glad you took my note the right way," he said quickly. "I've got some pretty good reasons for not leaving this room." He indicated a chair.

"Your note seemed so extraordinarily urgent," she said, sitting rather undecidedly. She still crumpled the note with her two hands.

"It had to be," he went on briskly. "Some folks who want to see me are coming here, and I want to see them—here. They'd have stopped you from coming if they could."

Miss Simpson straightened in her chair. "There was no effort to prevent me."

"No; I didn't give them time."

"May I ask to whom you refer?"

"Oh!"—his hands made a gesture of wide inclusion—"the whole kit and boodle of them."

She stiffened again with offense. "You are inelegant, Mr. Pike!"

"I haven't time to be elegant, even if I knew how."

"Do you mean my chaperone would disapprove?" she demanded.

He chuckled grimly. "I shouldn't be surprised. I reckon the whole fine flower of Eu-

rope would disapprove. 'Disapprove!'—they'd sand-bag you to keep you out of this room."

The girl arose swiftly. "Oh, then I can't stay."

Pike stepped alertly between her and the door toward which she had moved. There was a new ring of dominance in his voice. "Yes you can and you will; you've *got* to!"

"'Got to'! I shall not!" She braved another step toward him.

"I'm your guardian and you'll do as I say. You'll obey me this once if you never do again." She was regarding him with angry defiance but he went on with increased determination. "You'll stay here while I talk to these people and you'll stay in spite of anything they say or do to make you go. There! That's plain, isn't it?" His voice had risen slightly and after a survey of his set face she turned almost timidly back to her chair. "God knows I hate to talk rough to you," he went on more evenly. "I wouldn't hurt your feel-

ings for the world, but it's come to a point where I've got to use the authority I have over you."

During this speech she had surprisingly been engaged in smoothing out the note she had so recently crumpled, but now she flashed defiance anew.

"Authority—you over me? Do you think for one moment——"

He broke in upon her with a measured almost savage grimness. "You'll stay here for the next twenty minutes if I have to make Crécy and Agincourt look like a Peace Conference!"

She cowered in the chair, staring up at him aghast. Absently her hands still smoothed the crumpled note, but she did not speak. He continued in tones of marked sternness. "You and your brother have soaked up a society-column notion of life over here; you're like old Pete Delaney of Terre Hut'—he got so he'd drink cold tea if there was a whisky label on

the bottle. They've fuddled you with labels. It's my business to see that you know what kind of people you're dealing with—and I'm going to *do* it, don't make any mistake about that!"

Her lip trembled piteously. "You're bullying me! I don't see why you talk so brutally to me."

"Do you think I'd do it for anything but you—*you!*"

"Oh, you are odious—insufferable!"

"Don't you think I know just how you despise me?" He was humble for the moment, yet stubborn with it.

The girl continued for a moment her unconscious smoothing of the wrinkled sheet, then spoke, her eyes down. "I do not despise you; if I had stayed at home and grown up there I should probably have been a provincial young woman playing—singing—'Sweet Genevieve' for you tonight. But my life has not been that, and you have humiliated me from the

moment of your arrival. You have made me ashamed both of you and of myself. And now you have some preposterous plan which will shame me again—humiliate both of us once more before my friend, these gentlefolks——"

She was interrupted by loud calls from behind the shut door. Pounding rather than knocking resounded there and the voice of Lady Creech in agitation was heard above several others.

"I guess the gentlefolk are here," remarked Pike in a voice of extreme dryness. Hereupon the double doors were very frankly thrown open by a besieging group, and Lady Creech made a flustered entrance, followed quickly by the Comtesse de Champigny, Horace and the Honorable Almeric. All appeared to be profoundly shocked.

"My dear child," sputtered Lady Creech, "what are you doing in this dreadful place with this dreadful person?" Her ladyship's

rather bony nose was elevated both in disparagement of Pike and of a spacious salon which was really not dreadful at all in its appointments.

Madame de Champigny in a very pretty horror echoed, *"Les convenances!,* my dear child!" with the air of one who has ever paid them the most shrinking deference.

Even the Honorable Almeric allowed it to be seen that he regarded this as indeed going too far. "Oh, I say, you know, really Ethel, you can't stay here, you know, *can* you?"

The expostulations thus far had been rather ably concerted, but their intention was patent.

Pike faced them from the door. "I'm her guardian; she's here by my authority—she'll stay by my authority." He turned quickly to observe the smiling entrance of the Earl of Hawcastle who bowed sardonically to him.

"Good evening, Mr. Pike!" The greeting was couched in his lordship's suavest tones, but the American most uncouthly ignored it.

Brother Horace now intervened. "Lord Hawcastle will you insist upon Ethel's leaving this place at once? It's quite on the cards we shall have a disagreeable scene here."

His lordship smiled most amiably. "I see no occasion for her leaving, really. We are here simply for Mr. Pike's answer. He knows where we stand and"—there was a perceptible tightening of his tones—"we know where *he* stands."

"I reckon you're right so far." Pike smiled ever so faintly.

"And his answer will be yes," continued the still amiable Earl.

"You're wrong there," broke in Pike with quiet emphasis.

His lordship appeared to take thought. "Perhaps you are right, Mr. Granger-Simpson." He quickly regarded Pike and became entirely serious. "Painful things may be done here after all. Better the young lady were spared them. Take your sister away."

"By all means! It may be quite rowdy, you know." The Honorable Almeric tugged nervously at his mustache and also regarded the American with worried eyes.

"My dear, you positively must go!" Thus Lady Creech. Even Mr. Pike had never been more authoritative in manner.

"Ethel, I command you to go!" The voice of Horace came near to breaking under the strain of this.

The troubled girl had been folding and refolding the sheet her nervous hands had restored to smoothness. Carefully she placed it on the arm of her chair—as if this were some matter of importance—and half arose with a timid glance at Pike.

"Stay right where you are—don't you move," commanded the imperious Pike.

"Oh, I say!" This was a heated outburst from the Honorable Almeric.

"The lynching ruffian!" cried Lady Creech.

"Ethel, do you mean to let this fellow dic-

tate to you?" Horace was now plaintive.

The dazed girl sank back into her chair. She spoke breathlessly, rather loudly, as if resistence were now hopeless. "But—he says I *must!*" Her eyes wavered helplessly to Pike who now turned to the Earl of Hawcastle.

"You're here for an answer, you say?"

"Yes!" It was confident enough, though slightly defensive in tone.

"An answer to what?"

His lordship rather painfully resumed his suavity. "An answer to our request that you accede to the wishes of this young lady."

"And if I don't, what are you going to do?"

"Tut, tut!" exclaimed the shocked Earl and was seconded instantly by an equally shocked chorus. "Barbarian!" rang the voice of Lady Creech. "The man is an *Apache!*" chanted the Comtesse de Champigny, and the voice of Horace, none too vibrant, was heard to command, "Ethel, you *must* go!"

"Tell her what you're going to do if I don't accede," insisted the relentless Pike.

"A gentleman would spare her that," declared his shocked lordship.

"*I* won't! Speak out! Why do you come here so sure of the answer you want?"

"You are brutal, Mr. Pike!" His lordship swallowed rather desperately.

"Don't mumble your words!" Lady Creech bent her ablest glare upon the offender.

"I won't mumble," Pike assured her. "I'll make it even plainer than you like!"

Horace again raised a voice in whose timbre he obviously had too little confidence. "I protest against this!"

"Throw the rotter out that window!" directed the Honorable Almeric, thoughtfully moving back a step or two as if not to impede those who might obey him.

Pike caught the girl's piteous glance and held it. "This afternoon I tried to help a poor devil—a broken-down Russian running away

from Siberia where he'd been for nine years." The girl's eyes were eagerly upon his now, and all her attention for him. "He was a poor, weak thing, hounded like you've seen a rat in the gutter by dogs and bootblacks. Some of your friends here—" His gesture was comprehensive and rather blasting—"saw us bring him into this apartment, and they know I've got him here now. And if I don't hand you and seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars of the money John Simpson made, over to them they're going to act on their knowledge. Do you know what that means? It means that the man I tried to help goes back to rot in Siberia and that I go to an Italian jail for two years or as much longer as they can make it."

"Nonsense!" His lordship was bitter in his violence, but the girl arose to face his accuser with an even greater bitterness.

"I knew," she began, "that you had only a further humiliation in store for me——"

His lordship sought to interrupt. "But my dear——"

She turned upon him with quiet dignity. "No, no—you need make no denial for yourselves. Can you think I would believe that absurdity?" She haughtily faced Pike once more. "And you! Do you think I would believe that an English noble would stoop——"

Pike stepped tensely before her with a look of contempt that halted her words.

"*Stoop!* I'll tell you how low he *stooped!* Ten years ago in St. Petersburg there was a poor devil of a revolutionist who in his crazy patriotism took government money for the cause he believed in. He made the mistake of keeping that money in his house when this man knew it was there." Amazingly his hand pointed to the Earl of Hawcastle. Once more the light of his lordship's smile had faded out leaving merely a mouth unhandsomely distorted, a face strained and ashen. "He made the other mistake," continued Pike rapidly, "of

having a wife that this man coveted and stole—as he coveted and stole the money. Oh, he made a good job of it! Don't think tonight is the first time he's given information to the police. He did it then—after he had the wife and money—and the husband went to Siberia——"

"A dastardly slander!" His lordship's voice rang with outraged innocence.

"—and he'll do it again tonight" continued Pike. "I go to an Italian jail—" he suddenly swung his outstretched hand toward the curiously rigid figure of the Comtesse Champigny—"and by the living God, that woman's poor devil of a husband goes back to Siberia."

"It's a ghastly lie!" shouted his lordship. Madame de Champigny had shivered under a cry of fright.

"You came for your answer," said Pike. "Here it is." He called sharply. "Ivanoff!"

A door was opened and the Russian ap-

peared. The gaunt figure was motionless a moment while the glittering eyes in the worn face took in the room and its occupants. Then a hand flew to clutch his throat as if it would strangle the sharp cry that broke from it. The Comtesse de Champigny, first in his path as he now slowly advanced, fell to her knees with a little shuddering sob. The Russian lifted both his clenched fists above her, but they did not descend, although the watchful Pike stepped toward him.

"Ivan! Oh, Mother of God! Ivan! Don't kill me!"

The clenched fists wavered, then fell weakly as the Russian seemed to collapse into the chair before which he had halted. His head in his hands he sobbed chokingly. The woman, huddled at his feet, moaned piteously.

Horace started toward her. "Hélène!" he called. He found himself against the outstretched arm of Pike.

"You keep back; she's his wife. And

there—" he turned upon the Earl of Hawcastle—"there stands his best friend."

"It's a lie! I never saw the man before in my life!" His lordship was perhaps less effective of manner now than we have ever seen him.

Pike gestured grimly toward the huddled woman before them. "The lady seems to recognize him."

But his lordship had regained a proper indignation. "Almeric, go for the police. Call them quickly!" Madame de Champigny painfully brought herself to her feet to face him. "No! no! I can't," she pleaded.

Pike had gone to Ivanoff and now stood with a hand on his shoulder.

"Call them in—we're ready." Then he spoke to the wretchedly drooping girl. "But I want you always to remember that I considered it cheap at the price." In an agony of shame, she turned from him, then turned again from another—from Madame de Cham-

pigny who was making a slow, frightened progress toward the Earl of Hawcastle.

"Almeric!" again shouted his lordship.

The Honorable Almeric went quickly to the double doors and threw them open. "Tell that officer to bring his men in here," he called. There was a tense pause as steps were heard, but the Honorable Almeric fell back in blank amazement as there briskly entered not the carabiniere he had expected but the smiling Herr von Grollerhagen. He halted as he quietly surveyed the group.

"There will be no arrests tonight, my friends," he announced, still smiling.

His lordship called again in a mounting rage of impatience. "Do as I say, Almeric! This man goes too!" He indicated the German whose urbanity thereupon seemed to wax in brilliance.

"The officer is not there—the carabiniere have been withdrawn," he remarked almost placatingly. He turned to Pike. "For your

sake, my friend, I have relinquished my incognito." His friend received this with a puzzled dropping of the jaw. The German turned to his lordship. "The man Ivanoff is in my custody now."

His lordship became as nearly violent as is seemly in one of noble birth.

"By whose authority? Do you know that you are speaking to the Earl of Hawcastle?"

Our young Monsieur Ribière had closely followed his master and was now receiving the latter's coat and hat. He turned quickly to his lordship.

"More respectful, monsieur. *You* are addressing his Highness, the Grand Duke Vasili of Russia!" Even Lady Creech heard him. Ribière was unlikely to mumble his words on the few occasions when it was permitted him to announce his employer's rank.

"Respectful!" murmured Pike—"and think what I've been calling him!"

The recent German flourished a cheerful

hand toward him. "It has been refreshing, my friend." He turned to the waiting Ribière. "I shall take Ivanoff's statement in writing at once. Bring him with you." He turned curtly and went out past the valet who had opened the door for him. Ribière waited with an expectant glance at the fugitive, then went to touch him on the shoulder. "His Highness will take your statement," he said.

Dazedly the Russian arose to follow. Again Madame de Champigny shrunk toward his lordship with a cry of fear. The eyes of the Russian for a brief moment blazed upon her from his haggard face. "I would not touch you," he called hoarsely,—"not even to strangle you." His gaze passed to the Earl of Hawcastle. "But God will let me pay my debt to *him!*" He followed Ribière with head once more bowed.

In the silence that ensued his lordship became aware of the steady gaze of Miss Ethel Simpson. There was that in it which puzzled

him. He looked down. He saw that he had for some moments been holding a chair before him with the firmness that one would grasp a defensive weapon. The girl's eyes were now resting inscrutably upon the chair. He cast it from him ungently—ungratefully, it might be said. Then, choking with sudden rage, he advanced a step toward Pike. "Why, you——"

But Pike himself had advanced and now spoke almost genially. "Oh, I hated to hand this to you, my lord. I didn't come over here to make the fine flower of Europe any more trouble than they've got. But I had to *show* John Simpson's daughter. And I guess now she isn't wanting any alliance with the remnants of Crécy and Agincourt."

The girl came close to him, flushed, eager, tremulous. She spoke with a wondrous humility yet there was no doubt that she meant the very surprising words she uttered. "But I have no choice," she protested. "Don't you

see? I gave Almeric my promise when I thought it was an honor to bear his name. Now that you have shown me it is a shame to bear it, the promise is only the more sacred. The shame is not his fault." She raised to him eyes that were moist with her imploring. "You—you want me to be—honorable—don't you?"

Pike shivered as from a blow, looking about him with dazed eyes. Then he brought himself to stare at her. After a long, startled look he managed to say, in a voice that was feeble indeed, "I know *you* didn't come from Missouri—but your father and mother must have both come from there, didn't they?"

CHAPTER XIII

LORD HAWCASTLE DISPLAYS THE BETTER PART OF VALOR

At an early hour the following morning the Earl of Hawcastle in travelling suit and cap rather impatiently admonished a porter of the Regina Margherita who seemed to fumble with the straps of a travelling bag just outside the stately portals of that hostelry. In addition to this bag there were other impediments of travel, a hat-box, a strapped rug and lesser bags, surrounding his lordship. He now directed the conveyance of these to the gate at which a carriage had just halted. The porter laboriously bedecked himself with them—seeming to evince arms where none commonly are—

and precariously footed a toilsome way to the gate.

The manner of his lordship was nervous, even apprehensive, and wary to an extreme. He turned swiftly at the sound of approaching steps but emitted a relaxing breath as his son lounged to the doorway. The manner of the Honorable Almeric betrayed no apprehension whatever. Through the smoke of his cigarette he surveyed his troubled parent with a genial serenity.

"Ah, Governor! See you're movin'."

"It depends," snapped his lordship with an uneasy glance into the hotel.

"Depends? I say! Madame de Champigny took the mornin' boat to Naples, your trunks are gone and there go your bags. Shouldn't say that looked much like dependin'." The Honorable Almeric smiled enjoyably at this shrewd bit of penetration.

"It does, though," persisted his lordship—"with that devilish convict about——"

"But I say, you're not in a funk about him, are you, Governor? You could bowl the chap over with one finger."

Again his lordship glanced warily over his shoulder. "Not if he should have what he didn't have last night—or I shouldn't be here."

"You don't think the beggar'd be taking a shot at you?" The Honorable Almeric was interested at last.

"I don't know what the crazy fool mightn't do."

"But you know he's really quite as much in custody as you could wish. That Vasilivitch chap has got him fast enough." He turned at the approach of Lady Creech. "Hasn't he, Aunty?"

"The Grand Duke Vasili," continued his lordship bitterly, "has the reputation of being a romantic fool. I don't know what moment he may decide to let the fellow loose."

Lady Creech stepped forward to speak with triumphant indignation.

"I have the advantage of you, Hawcastle—he's just done it."

His lordship was startled. "What?"

"Got him a pardon from Russia by telegraph."

"Outrageous! You don't mean it."

"Ethel has just told me."

"God!" said his lordship with simple eloquence. He took a quick step toward the gate and the waiting carriage. "Then I must drive to Castellamare for the train."

"An outrage indeed," echoed Lady Creech, "and our plans all so horribly upset."

His lordship paused for a quick word of encouragement. "You must see it through, you mustn't let the thing fail. What's more, you've got to hurry it just as if I were here. The girl gave her word last night that she'd stick, remember!"

"She's behaving very peculiarly this morning," warned her ladyship. "In fact, outrageously would be nearer the word."

"How?"

"Shedding silly tears over this dreadful Ivanoff's story. What is more, she has sent that impossible Pike person to him with money—*money,* do you understand. I couldn't find out how much but I'm sure it was a lot."

"By Jove!" The Honorable Almeric beamed upon them with sudden inspiration. "But she's buying the beggar off—what!—to keep him from making a row for us!"

His lordship was instantly cheered. "That's precisely what she's trying to do!"

"Then why need you go if the dear girl is doing that so thoughtfully?" queried Lady Creech.

"Because I'm not sure she can. Wire me at the Bertolini, Naples, if she succeeds. By Jove, this shows she means to stick!"

"To be sure—for the sake of her promise."

"And for the sake of the name," added his lordship and was gone.

The latter half of his frankly hurried prog-

ress to the carriage was noted by Mr. Pike as he sauntered around the corner of the hotel from an early morning inspection of the motor-car he had supposed to be the property of a casual German. He bent a curiously untroubled gaze upon the back of the retreating Earl and remarked thoughtfully. "Your Pa seems in a hurry."

Lady Creech raked him with her best glare and progressed haughtily into the hotel. The Honorable Almeric replied cheerfully enough, "Oh, yes, possibly. He's off to catch a train. The Governor's so easily worried by trifles."

Pike regarded this unruffled descendant of the St. Aubyns with a sort of chuckling admiration. "Well, you don't worry yourself—not too easy; do you, son?"

The Honorable Almeric yawned cheerfully. "One finds nothing in particular to bother one this morning," he affirmed.

"Nothing at all?" queried Pike, somewhat in awe.

"Not I, at least," insisted the cheerful one. "Of course Miss Ethel is standing by her promise."

"Of course she is," agreed Pike. "You didn't think she'd go and break her word to you, did you?"

"Certainly not! But you see the Governor thought it best to clear out a bit until we make certain she manages to draw off this convict chap."

Pike was at once both puzzled and interested. "Draw him off!"

"Yes—what you Americans call 'affixing' him, isn't it?"

"*Af*-fixing him? Say, don't try to talk United States, son. Just try to tell me in your own way."

The Honorable Almeric appeared to writhe in the throes of mental effort out of consideration for this slowness of wit in the curious American.

"Well, she's been giving him money, hasn't

she? You took it to him yourself, didn't you? Naturally, we should understand what it was for, *shouldn't* we? She's trying to keep the beggar quiet with his bally gossip."

Now there was awe in the glance of Pike. "So that's what she sent this poor devil the money for, was it?"

"What other reason could there be?" retorted the Honorable Almeric with a ring of triumph.

"Well, you know I sort of gathered"—Pike's tone was clumsily apologetic—"that it was because she was sorry for him, thought he'd been wronged a whole lot—but of course I'm stupid in those matters."

"Well, ra-*ther!* I don't know that it was so necessary for her to shut him up, but it jolly well showed a very worthy intention in her, didn't it, now?"

"Would you mind," humbly asked Pike, "my being present when you thank her for it?"

"Shouldn't in the least, my dear chap, if I

intended thanking her. It simply shows she already considers herself one of us. It's perfectly plain—" The speaker suffered another inspiration. He chuckled enjoyably and pointed his stick at Pike. "Why—it's as plain as *you* are!"

Pike sighed regretfully, despairingly. "Oh, if I could only get you over to Kokomo!" A moment he dwelt fondly on some secret vision. "So that's why you're not worrying this morning, is it?" he suddenly demanded.

"Worrying?" The Honorable Almeric seemed to recall that the world was still too much with him. "By Jove, that reminds me. My good man, do you mind excusing me? There's a most likely bull-pup in the village. Had him in mind for a fortnight, now, and I shall get him at once. Some other chap might snatch him up. Good morning!" With a cordial wave of his stick he took the path at a sprightly gait, the music of his cheerful whistle floating back. Gazing after him Pike shook

his head with a half-admiring, half-sardonic chuckle. The Honorable Almeric had provided not the least of those rude shocks Mr. Pike had been compelled to endure since his arrival at Sorrento.

At the sound of steps he turned. The figure of Miss Ethel Simpson had framed itself in the doorway of the Regina Margherita. It was his first view of the girl since the previous night when she had tearfully implored his approval of her steadfastness. She was no longer tearful, though her saddened eyes still seemed timidly to beseech him as he approached her.

"I hear that Lord Hawcastle has left the hotel," she remarked mournfully.

"Yes; I saw him go," Pike dryly answered. The girl's eyes were down and he surveyed her with a vast comic dismay which he quickly masked with a look of concern as she raised her eyes again.

"He left very quickly."

"He did seem to be overlooking all this pretty scenery."

"He was afraid of Ivanoff." She uttered this discreetly, as if she were favoring Pike confidentially with an item that might astonish him.

He made no comment on this. "I had your note with the money for Ivanoff. It broke the poor fellow all up, but I told him you'd be hurt if he didn't take it."

"I'm so glad of that." She smiled wanly at him.

"And now he wants to thank you before he goes. May I bring him here?"

"But of course!—though I hope he won't be—Oh, not *too* thankful."

"You can't expect him to be exactly mad at you," suggested Pike as he turned away. She smiled sadly again while he could observe it, but then the smile faded and she watched his retreating figure with eyes in which dwelt a curious startled wonder.

She was distracted from this gaze by the noisy exit from the hotel of a horde of servants, led by Mariano and Michele. They formed a double line from the door and waited breathless, their bodies alert for bowing. Young Michele in his eagerness already made little beginnings of bows, restraining himself each time. An observer might have remarked that he was muttering to himself continuously. The girl, wondering what this preparation portended, strolled to a nearby table. The waiting group held itself rigid for a breathless moment, then bent ceremoniously at its centers as the false von Grollerhagen emerged from the hotel. He frowned at the bobbing lines and made an abrupt gesture of dismissal. Mariano shooed his cohorts into the hotel, reserving for himself a final polished bow of submission before he followed them.

The embarrassed Miss Simpson made the deep curtsey the newcomer's rank might justify.

"Not *you!*" he gaily protested, taking her hand. "You see,"—he waved despairingly toward the hotel—"I must fly to some place where an incognito will be respected. If I stay here it will be—what you call—all fuss and feathers and revolutionary agents. I look now to make my adieux to your guardian. Incognito or out of it he is my very good friend —" There was a quick little sharpening of the glance he bent upon her. "—no matter if he *is* an egotist."

"An egotist!" She had flamed instantly. "That is the last thing in the world he should be called."

"Ah so!" He regarded her now with a genial shrewdness. "And what do you call him?"

"I? I—I call him—" She had begun bravely enough, but blushed and stopped under his searching eyes.

"Ah, bravo!" He smiled understandingly. "And I—I call him an egotist because he is so content to be what he is that he will not pre-

tend to be something else. I respect your country in him, my dear young lady, though he cares nothing whether I am a noble or a commoner." She was blushing more deeply, for he had said this thing with deep, serious questioning of her in his eyes. It was as if he had added—"There be Americans who prefer to be thought something else."

"No; I can't imagine him caring about the rank of people. He seems—seems—" She was floundering pitifully as Pike, accompanied by Ivanoff, returned through the grove. She silently blessed him for the relief.

"Ah, my friend! I have come to bid you good-bye. Life is a series of farewells, they say; but if ever you come to Petersburg when I am there you shall be made welcome. Your ambassador will tell you where to find me."

"I know I'd be welcome," responded Pike with deep conviction. "And if you ever get out our way," he continued cordially, "don't miss Indiana and don't miss Kokomo. Any

depot hackman will tell you where to find me, and the boys will help me show you a good time. Really, you'd like it, Doc—" He stopped, horrified at this "break" as he would have termed it. The other trembled with a vast but silent laugh.

"I know I'd like it," he said at last.

"I don't just know how to call you by name," continued the apologetic Pike, "but I guess you'll understand that I do think an awful lot of you."

The other seized his hand and controlled his laugh. "My friend, I have confided to you that you are a great man. But a great man is sure to be set upon a pedestal by some pretty lady." Only Miss Ethel Simpson—who turned away—caught the flicker of his eyes toward her. "And it is a great responsibility to occupy a pedestal. On that account I depart in some anxiety for you."

Pike frowned his bewilderment at this. "What do you mean?"

"Ah, you do not understand? Then, my friend—what is it you have taught me to say?—Ah, yes—then there is sand in your gear-box." With another great laugh he turned from the puzzled American, bowed deeply to the girl, gave his hand with quick seriousness to Ivanoff who stood by, hat in hand, and went quickly into the hotel. Mariano in the doorway bowed low as he passed, a bow of brimming gratification. At last the Hotel Regina Margherita was not to lose the honor of having it known that the Grand Duke Vasili of Russia had favored it with his patronage.

CHAPTER XIV

MR. PIKE CROSSES A CERTAIN RIVER

As the most exalted of the Hotel Regina Margherita's guests vanished into the cool gloom of its foyer the haggard Russian who had looked so gratefully after him turned to Miss Simpson.

"Dear kind young lady, your guardian has known how to make me accept the help you granted. He has known how because his heart is like yours, full of goodness. Now I shall go to London and teach the languages. There I shall be able to repay you—at least what you have given in money."

The girl frowned studiously down at a tile as she asked, "Professor Ivanoff, are you following Lord Hawcastle and your wife?"

"My wife exists no longer for me."

"But Lord Hawcastle? Do you mean to follow him?"

"No, no, no! I would not hurt his body—I could not. The suffering of a man, it is here—here!" He clutched his head with his thin hands. "What is it he has of most value in this world? It is that name of his. Except for that he is poor—and that I shall destroy. He shall not go into his clubs; he shall not go among his own class, and on the streets they shall point at him. His story and mine will be made—Ah, but too well known. And that name of which he and all his family have been so proud, it shall be disgrace and dishonor to bear."

"Already it is that." She still looked down.

The other seemed to shake off his bitterness. "But I forget myself—I talk so ugly!"

"It is not in my heart to blame you—your wrongs have given you the right."

The Russian raised her hand to his lips. "It is so good—freedom—I shall pray God for

you," he murmured. "And you—" He turned to Pike. Twice he essayed speech, then clutched his throat with the familiar gesture, dumbly shook his head and fled into the hotel. In silence they watched him go.

"There *are* some good people over here, aren't there?" ventured Pike.

The girl looked up at him almost brightly. "Yes, and when you're home again I hope you will remember them."

"I will."

"And I hope you will forget everything I've ever said."

He appeared to debate this gravely. "Somehow it doesn't seem as if I very likely would."

She took a little step toward him, a lift in her voice. "Oh, yes you will. All those unkind things I have said to you——"

"Oh, I'll forget those easy."

She continued eagerly, a hint of tears in her voice. "And the other things, too, when you're once among your kind, good home-folks you

like so well. And probably there's one among them you'll be glad to get back to, so glad you'll hardly know you've been away—an unworldly girl—" she faltered at this, but went on more earnestly. "—one that doesn't need to be cured—Oh, of all sorts of follies, a kind girl, one that's always been sweet to you." She turned impulsively to him. "I can see her—she wears a white muslin and waits for you by the gate at twilight—isn't she like that?"

He eyed her whimsically. "White muslin! In Kokomo? Do you think we're that far back?" He evaded her glance again.

"But there *is* someone there," she insisted; "—someone you've cared for?"

He nodded gravely to this. "Well, she's only been there in a way. I've had her picture on my desk for a good while. Sometimes when I go home of an evening she kind of seems to be there." He paused for a moment, gazing out to the far, fair islands in that shining bay. "I bought a homely old house up on North Elm

Street—in fact it's the house you were born in. It's sort of lonesome there sometimes, and then I get to thinking that she's there, maybe, sitting at an old piano that used to be my mother's—singing to me——"

"Singing—singing 'Sweet Genevieve'?"

"Yes, that's my favorite." His gaze was still out over the water. "But then I come to, you see, and I find it isn't so—no voice comes to me, and there isn't anyone there but me—" He swallowed painfully, then brightened as he faced her "—and it's so foolish that even Jim Cooley can write me letters making fun of it."

The girl herself now gazed far out to sea. "You'll find her some day—someone to fulfill that vision, I mean—and I shall think of you in your old house among the beech-trees. I shall think of you often with her, listening to her voice in the twilight. And I shall be far away from that sensible, kindly life—keeping the promise I have made—" She herself now swal-

lowed painfully "—and living out—my destiny."

Pike became suddenly alert. "What destiny?"

"Oh, but I am bound to Almeric in his misfortune—I am bound to him *by* his misfortune." She narrowed her eyes on the prospect, drew a long breath and went on with a sort of sorrowful eagerness. "He has to bear a name that will be a by-word of disgrace, and it is my duty to help him bear it, to help him make it honorable again; to inspire him in the struggle that lies before him to rise above it by his own efforts; to make a career for himself; to make the world forget the disgrace of his father in the light of his own triumphs—in the product of his own work——"

"Work!" Had she glanced at the speaker she would have seen that he was aghast. With her eyes at sea, however, she caught only the amazement in his voice.

"Oh, I'm all American today," she contin-

ued. "No matter how humbly he begins, it will be a beginning, and no matter what it may mean to me now I must be by his side helping him with all my energy and all my strength. Can you challenge that? Isn't it true?" Yet there was no challenge in her own glance as she now turned it upon him. Rather curiously it was almost imploring, as if she hoped for objections.

Mr. Pike seemed dense to this mute appeal. "I can't deny it," he said simply. "That's what any good, brave woman ought to feel."

There was a catch in her voice as she desperately went on, "And since it has to be done it ought to be done at once. Poor Almeric—I've not seen him since last night."

"He's not here just now," said the sympathetic Pike. Neither of them observed brother Horace as he drew near from the hotel gate. Horace slashed viciously with his stick at innocent flowering shrubs and appeared to be vastly perturbed. He paused unobserved now and

listened. He seemed to be in one of his least amiable moods.

"I've shirked facing the poor fellow today," the girl went on mournfully. "He has always been so light and gay that I've dreaded to see him bending under this blow—shamed and overcome. Now it is my duty to see him, to show him how he can hold up his head in spite of it."

"I agree it's your duty." Pike gravely inclined his head.

She was eager and tremulous at this. "That means that you—my guardian—think I am right?"

"I agree to it, I said."

"Then that must mean that you consent—" She broke off under the excitement of this.

"It does," said Mr. Pike blandly. "I give my consent to your marriage."

"You *do!*" She was shocked, frightened, incredulous. He in his turn might have seen

that she was aghast, but he did not look at her.

"I place it all in your hands," he said. "You see your duty—who am I to keep you from it?"

Brother Horace, it seemed, had endured quite enough of this. He flashed between them, a superbly tailored figure of wrath. "I protest," he exclaimed. "She's talking like a romantic schoolgirl, and I, for one, won't bear it—I won't allow it. I tell you——"

His sister checked this vehemence with a piteous half-choked sob. "Too late!" she cried. "He's consented!" She fled from them, a handkerchief to her brimming eyes. There had been perhaps both dismay and a strange resentment in her tone. Horace continued furiously to Pike.

"I tell you I shall not permit that girl to throw herself away."

"Look here, are you the guardian of this girl?" Mr. Pike was truculent.

"A magnificent guardian *you* are!" Horace himself became magnificent in his wrath. "You—you come here to protect her from something you thought rotten—and now when we all know it's rotten, you hand her over." He ended with a wide gesture of relinquishment imputed to Pike, and a laugh of extreme bitterness. Then at once a new suspicion assailed him. "By Jove! I shouldn't be surprised if you consent to the settlement too!"

Mr. Pike had become solemn under the outburst. "My son, I shouldn't be surprised if I did."

Horace gasped, yet contrived to point an accusing finger at the other.

"Have I gone crazy? Is the world turned topsy-turvy? Why, you haven't even a sense of humor!"

Pike drooped his whole body and bowed his head as if in confession. His shoulders heaved in testimony of his guilt.

Horace surveyed him with a pitying disgust.

"Wait till she hears of it," he said threateningly. "I'll bet my soul that will disgust her as much as it does me."

Mr. Pike recovered and very gravely made answer. "My son, I shouldn't be surprised if it did."

Something cryptic Horace found in this. He stared at the other in frank bewilderment. "By the Lord! but you play a queer game, Mr. Pike!"

Mr. Pike yawned rather pointedly and dropped to a friendly bench.

"Oh, I'm just crossing the Rubicon," he confided to the shocked Horace. "Your father used to have a saying: 'If you're going to cross the Rubicon, *cross* it!—don't wade out to the middle and stand there; you only get hell from both banks.'" He yawned again, taking almost no pains to conceal the process from his listener.

Lady Creech, normally indignant though flustered, called testily to Horace from the

hotel door. "Mr. Granger-Simpson, have you seen my nephew?"

But Horace had endured much. The strain had told and he was in no mood to be accosted testily even by her ladyship. "No; I've rather avoided that, Lady Creech, if you don't mind my saying so."

"Mr. Granger-Simpson!"

The smouldering resentment of Horace was blown to flame. "I'm sorry, Lady Creech, but I've had a most awful shaking-up and I'm almost thinking of going back home with Mr. Pike. I rather think he's not far from right in some of his ideas, at least. And then we abused him, not only for himself but for his vulgar friend; yet his vulgar friend turned out to be a grand duke—" Horace drew a long shivering breath and took the plunge—"and look at what *our* friends have turned out to be!"

Lady Creech came as near to gasping as one of her station should and lifted a bony length

of nose in his direction as he stalked into the hotel.

Once more Lady Creech would have gasped, perhaps frankly this time, but the voice of the Honorable Almeric was borne to her from the grove, a cheerful voice lifted in encouragement.

"Come along! There's a good fellow!" he called.

"Almeric!" called her ladyship sharply.

"Here he comes—shamed and bending under the blow," murmured Pike, eliciting but a side glance of deep resentment from Lady Creech.

The Honorable Almeric approached gaily from the grove. He proudly led an uncertain puppy and seemed artlessly concerned that the whole world should rejoice in his treasure.

"Mariano! Mariano!" he called. Then he beamed upon her indignant ladyship. "I say, Aunty, ain't he rippin'? Lucky I got there just as I did—a bounder wanted to buy him five minutes later. Luck, what!" He hailed Mariano who had hastened at his call. "I say, Mariano,

think you can be trusted to wash him?"

"*Wash* heem!" Mariano lifted appealing hands to invoke the notice of Heaven upon this affront to his dignity. He murmured a sacred name.

"Tepid water, you know, and mind he doesn't take cold—you must dry the little beggar carefully; and just a little milk afterwards—nothing else but milk, you understand. Be deuced careful, I mean to say!"

"Signore, I will give him to a porter to be cared for." Mariano gingerly lifted the pulpy thing and bore it before him into the hotel. His lips moved silently as he went.

Lady Creech now regarded her nephew chillingly. The gaze of Pike from his bench, on the other hand, was cordiality itself.

"Almeric! Really, there are more important things, you know."

Almeric became serious. "Important, my word! But you don't seem to realize I might have missed him altogether. I think I'm

rather to be congratulated, you know, what!"

Mr. Pike had arisen lazily from his bench and came forward. "I think you are, my son. I've given my consent to my ward's marriage with you."

The Honorable Almeric seemed slightly bored. "But of course—you jolly well couldn't do anything else, *could* you now?"

"And the settlement?" quickly interposed Lady Creech, with a ready wit going to the kernel of the nut.

Pike waved generously. "The settlement, too—everything. I saw I couldn't oppose her." He shrugged helplessly.

"Couldn't oppose *us,* I dare say you mean." amended her ladyship. "But how much more graceful to have given your consent at once when you saw we were not ones to be opposed. However, you Americans are so weird. And how glad—how relieved—dear Ethel will be!"

"You can tell her the glad news right now," suggested Pike. "There she comes!"

CHAPTER XV

IN WHICH A SONG IS SUNG

The girl approached them almost timidly. Her eyes were dry but burned with a curious luster as they rested on the Honorable Almeric. "You are so brave," she murmured, quite mechanically and so low that no one thought of replying to her. Lady Creech enfolded her in an overjoyed embrace. It was dignified, yet it carried discreet hints of rollicking, for her ladyship was vastly relieved.

"Ethel, my dear, my dear!" she murmured.

The Honorable Almeric yawned cheerfully. "Didn't I tell you it would be all plain sailin', Aunty? There was nothing to worry about. The donkey chap was bound to give in, wasn't he?" He regarded Pike with genial, quite un-

malicious triumph. After all, he bore the fellow no grudge. He was not the unforgiving sort.

"I am so pleased, my child—so pleased at your good fortune. The sky has cleared wonderfully. Everything is settled at last!" Thus Lady Creech continued to murmur to the girl.

"Yes; it's all over," conceded Miss Simpson rather inscrutably. "My guardian has at last consented to the marriage."

There was a strange waiting look in the eyes of Pike as he watched the two, a waiting that somehow seemed to be appeased when he observed that the Honorable Almeric was moved to speech.

"Of course I never worried about it," he cheerfully assured all who listened. "But I fancy it will be a weight off the Governor's mind. I'll see that a wire catches him at Naples. He'll be jolly glad to know that you succeeded with the arrangement about that

convict chap, too. Everything rippin', what!"

Miss Simpson stood forth from the still-sheltering arm of Lady Creech and addressed her fiancé in tones that might have been thought to carry the faint flavor of rebuke. "Almeric, I think it's noble to be brave in trouble, but there——"

The Honorable Almeric made no effort whatever to conceal his bewilderment.

"I say, you know, you've really *got* me!" Mr. Pike here turned his gaze out over the shining waters as if the scene at hand were too sacred to be overlooked.

"I mean I admire you for your pluck," continued the girl eagerly,—"for your seeming unconcern under disgrace, but——"

"Disgrace!" The Honorable Almeric helplessly looked his puzzled appeal to each face in the group. "Why, who's disgraced? What silly rot! Not even the Governor, as I see it. You got that convict chap called off, didn't you?"

The girl was puzzled in her turn. "What are you saying, Almeric?"

"Why, that convict chap—didn't you send him out of the way? Bought him off, didn't you, so the rotter wouldn't talk about his silly affairs? I mean to say, gave him money not to bother us?" he concluded, for he had noted a rising bewilderment in the girl's staring eyes.

"Why, Heaven pity you! Do you think that?" she asked in a voice so low that it could hardly have reached the inattentive Mr. Pike, though his eyes at that moment flitted from one to another of the misty islands far out in that painted sea.

The Honorable Almeric was quickened to an uncomfortable suspicion.

"Oh, what? You couldn't draw him off? He wouldn't agree to be still? I say, that will be rather a pill for the Governor. I fancy he'll be a bit worried, you know."

There was goading in the glance the girl now put upon him. "Don't you see that it's

time for you to worry a little for yourself? That you've got to begin at once to do something worthy that will obliterate this shame—to begin a career—to work—to *work!*"

"Begin a career!" The Honorable Almeric was aghast at this vehement grotesquerie. "Work?" he continued dazedly. "But I mean to say—what *for?* What possible need will there be for an extreme like that? Don't you see, in the first place, there's the settlement——"

He had thought himself lucid, painstaking, kindly, but the girl interrupted him with a cry almost of rage. "Settlement! You talk of a settlement—*now!*" Her hitherto pale cheeks suddenly glowed with a tint to rival the flaming sea at which Mr. Pike so attentively gazed, but he did not turn his head. The Honorable Almeric seemed to lose an ordinarily capable control of his lower jaw. His eyes widened with dismay. Lady Creech somewhat snappishly uttered the reply he was unequal to.

"Settlement? *Certainly* there's the settlement!"

"What for?" Miss Simpson had controlled her tones to a metallic hardness.

Lady Creech descended to explanation. "Why, don't you understand, my dear child? You're to be the Countess of Hawcastle, aren't you?"

The Honorable Almeric, though but half recovered, again became vocal.

"Hasn't your American chap told you quite all about it? The only obstacle on earth between us was this fellow's consent to the settlement, and he's just given it. I mean to say, I heard his very words!"

"Do you mean to say he's consented to that?" Her eyes blazed from the Honorable Almeric to the man who, to all appearances, was still absorbed with the perspective of a distant horizon.

"He jolly well did! He consented with his own lips—didn't you?" He turned to the far-

gazing Pike in plaintive appeal for confirmation of this simple fact.

The latter recalled himself with difficulty from a choice marine spectacle. "Oh, that!" He waved a careless hand and bent his gaze again on his vision. "Certainly, I consented to the settlement," he added.

"Don't you see," prompted Lady Creech, almost pleadingly. "Don't you hear him? He didn't mumble his words. He's consented. Our troubles are over."

Miss Simpson entreated the dreamy profile of her guardian, wishing to wither him with her mounting scorn. But the profile remained fixed and her scorn had all to be for the two before her.

"I do hear him, and I disbelieve my own ears. Yesterday when I wanted something I thought of value—and that was a name—he refused to let me buy it. Today when I know that that name is less than nothing—worse than nothing—he bids me give my fortune for

it! Oh, what manner of man can he be. And *you?* Who are you that after last night you come to me and ask for a settlement?"

The Honorable Almeric stood dazed but unconvinced. Lady Creech frowned ably. "Certainly we ask a settlement! Would you, simple American girl that you are—after all—expect to enter a family such as ours and bring nothing?"

The Honorable Almeric was again inspired, this time by the girl's overwhelming consternation. He strove for a sane and reasoned mildness. "I can't see that the situation has changed since yesterday," he began easily. "But of course, if you think it has changed, I fancy I wouldn't be the bounder to stick out for the precise amount the dear old Governor named. Dare say there's a lot to be said on both sides. I mean to say, if you think that silly settlement ought to be something less on account of that little affair last night, why, we should be the last people in the world to haggle

over a few thousand pounds. I fancy you've misunderstood our attitude, what!"

Mr. Pike's head went a trifle forward as if he would strain his eyes to outline some engaging bit of a distant promontory.

"Oh, Oh!" It was a cry of strangely mingled rage and relief that rang from the throat of Miss Simpson. "Oh, that is the final word of my humiliation. I felt that you were in shame and dishonor, and because of that I was ready to keep my word—to stand by you, to help you make yourself into a man—to give my life to you. That you permitted the sacrifice was enough! Now you ask me to *pay* for the privilege of making it. Understand—I am released—I am free." She paused for a blasting glance at the man who was still engrossed with Nature in one of her loveliest aspects. "I am not that man's property to give away!"

Lady Creech fell into panic violence. "You are beside yourself. Isn't this what we've wanted all along? Your wits have gone."

She was ably upheld by the Honorable Almeric. "But I say, slow up a bit. Didn't you say with your own lips that you'd stick? Didn't you now?"

The girl faced him with a dull, smouldering rage. "Any promise I ever made to you is a thousand times cancelled." There was something deadly in the slow fall of the words. She stepped toward Pike with a sudden blazing concentration. "And as for you—never presume to speak to me again. This is final." The nature-lover seemed not to have heard, so profound was his absorption.

"Give me your arm, Almeric." Lady Creech had recovered the aplomb a St. Aubyn should never lose. She drew her nephew toward the hotel. The latter was mumbling words which Lady Creech took no pains to have repeated.

"Most extrord'n'ry girl, my word! Rather dreadful, isn't she? Fancy I know what it is, though—thinks too much. Caught her at it scores of times—goes about quite all over the

place—thinkin', thinkin'—unhealthy, what!" The mumble died, leaving the air strangely still.

Miss Simpson had watched the pair depart with a quickening impatience. When they had gone she turned abruptly—and haughtily—to the man she had forbidden ever to address her. The man continued interestedly to scan the outlying surface of the Mediterranean. She waited what time she could, which was not long. "What have you to say to me?" she demanded.

Pike slowly and with seeming reluctance withdrew his gaze from mere scenery. "Nothing!" he answered with a nonchalance that further enraged her.

"What explanation have you to make?"

"None!" It was not a good word for drawling, but he managed it.

She flashed instantly to a new bitterness. "That's because you don't care what I think of you. Indeed, you've already shown that when

you were willing to give me up to these people —and to let me pay them for taking me. You let me romanticize to you about honor and duty and sympathy—about my efforts to make that—that creature into a man—and you pretended to sympathize with me, and you knew all the time it was only—only the money they were after."

He did not drawl now. He spoke very humbly. "Well, I shouldn't be surprised."

"And didn't you have the faintest little understanding of me—enough to see that their asking for money now would horrify me? Didn't you know that your consenting to it—leaving me free to give it to them—would release me—make me free to deny everything to them?"

"I shouldn't be surprised if I had seen that." He was still grave and very humble.

A sudden light dazzled the girl. "You mean you've been saving me again from myself, from my silliness, from my romanticism—

that you've given me another revelation of the falsity, of the unreality, of my attitude toward these people—toward life itself."

He raised a deprecating, protesting hand, a gesture that somehow was warm with sympathy. "No, no!" he said.

She surveyed him with wonder-widened eyes, but her vehemence had not died. "You'd always say that—you'd always deny it; it's like you. You let me make a fool of myself and then you show it to me, and after that you deny it." She was tearful now, and newly angry because of it. "You are always exhibiting your superiority. Would you do that to the dream girl you told me of, to the girl at home who plays dream songs for you in that empty house among the beeches?" There was a plaintive note in her anger now. "Do you really think *any* girl could—could love a man for that? Oh,—" She desperately threw out her hands. "—go back to your dream girl, your lady of the picture!"

"She won't be there," he said.

"She *might* be! She might—" She stopped, breathless.

"Oh, there isn't any chance of that," he persisted mournfully. "That house will still be empty."

"Are you *sure?*" The tears had gone from her voice. She was facing him defiantly.

"There isn't any doubt in the world of it now."

She walked slowly toward the door of her rooms in the ivied wing. On its threshold she turned to look at him again. "You might be wrong *for once!*" she called. There was almost a hint of malicious triumph in the tones.

He looked sadly after her a moment, then shrugged with a grimace of comic dismay. "You old fool," he pronounced in tones of warm conviction. "You might have known all the time." Again the shrug of dismay. Slowly, with a still tender, still wistful resignation, he started down a lonely path of that garden.

"'Oh, Genevieve, sweet Genevieve!"

Three steps he took, then halted abruptly, listening with an almost fierce intentness.

The sounds of a piano vigorously struck came through the doorway that had so lately engulfed Miss Ethel Simpson. As Pike listened a vast incredulity grew in his face. Now the voice of one singing was heard and the listener's face relaxed from its stiffened lines of incredulity to a softened, almost appalled wonder, for he could no longer doubt what ballad of old she sang. And in the girl's singing he now seemed to detect an alien something unfitted to the song's tender melancholy; nothing less than a preposterous note of almost malicious triumph, as if she were again crisply reminding him—"You might be wrong—*for once!*" Slowly a look of half-doubting rapture grew in his eyes. His arms unconsciously widened toward the doorway, empty, eager, patient.

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The days may come, the days may go . . ."

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"Oh Genevieve, sweet Genevieve!
The days may come, the days may go . . ."

The piquing little note of triumph had gone, though. And her voice had become too tremulous even for that old song.

THE END

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